THE INCARNATION

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A TREATISE

ON THE

INCARNATION

OF THE

ETERNAL WORD.

NEWBURGH:

DAVID L. PROUDFIT.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

The substance of the following Essay was published several years ago, in an Edinburgh periodical, in connection with a review of some ephemeral publications on the human nature of Christ. When the present Editor first met with the article, he was so impressed with its value, that he thought it would be useful to give it to the public in a separate form. This belief was strengthened by a re-perusal, after the lapse of some years, and by the concurring opinion of several judicious friends. He accordingly proceeded to prepare it for publication. In doing this, the whole Essay had to be re-written and several alterations made, as it was not originally written for separate publication. No farther liberties, however, have been taken with the Author than were necessary to give the work a regular and connected form. In preparing it for

the press, the Editor believed it calculated to subserve the cause of truth and righteousness, and his sincere desire is that it may be blessed to the welfare of his fellow-beings. How far his estimate of the value of the work is correct, will be judged by the Christian public, to whom it is now respectfully committed.

THE INCARNATION.

The doctrine of the Incarnation, so far as it can be understood by man, is sufficiently simple, and might be stated in a few sentences. But it has been so involved—not in mystery, for a mystery the gospel makes it, and a mystery it must ever remain—but in metaphysical perplexities, as to make it look with a most unfavourable aspect, upon almost every article of our creed. It will therefore be necessary to take a somewhat more extended survey of the work of redemption than would otherwise have been requisite, that we may, if possible, have a clearer view of the Incarnation from the light reflected on it by being viewed in its proper place in the Christian system.

That God made all things for his own glory, is a proposition which we suppose will not be disputed by any. It is a proposition, however, which requires some explanation. When we say that he made all things for his own glory, we mean, not that he made them for the purpose of rendering himself more glorious than he was from all eternity, for that is impossible, his glory being alike incapable of increase and diminution, but that he made them for the pur-

pose of making his glorious perfections manifest. And when we say that he made all things to manifest his own perfections, we mean that the manifestation was to be given, not to himself, which was impossible, but to the creatures whom he made. It was obvious then that the manifestation was to be made, both *by* the creatures and *to* the creatures. They were to be both the manifesters, and the percipients of the perfections so manifested; and this was the great end of the being of the creatures. Now as this is the end of every creature's being, that it may, according to its nature, manifest the perfections of God, and perceive them as manifested by itself and all other creatures, it follows, as a necessary consequence, that to do this must be just the glory and happiness of the creature, its being's end and aim; and it follows also, that the higher the degree in which any creature is capable of doing this, the higher is the degree of glory and of happiness which it is capable of attaining and enjoying.

That every thing, according to its nature and capacity, does both manifest the perfections of God, and rejoice in them, is a fact open to every one's observation, and is often referred to in Scripture. The inanimate parts of God's works are often spoken of, not only as mani-

festing his perfections, but as rejoicing in the manifestation. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth forth the works of his hands. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night teacheth knowledge." The sun rejoiceth to run his race; the heavens and the earth are called on to hear the word of the Lord; the sea roars and the fulness thereof; the floods lift up their voice; the forests clap their hands, the mountains break forth into singing, and the little hills rejoice. These, no doubt, will be considered as figurative expressions, and so they are; but then they are expressions which show the truth of the principle that all things, according to their nature, manifest the perfections of God, and rejoice in them when so manifested. The same remark still more obviously applies to such things as have life and feeling. The lower animals, which have received their instincts from God, and enjoy his bounties, though they know not, nor can know, any thing of him from whom their enjoyments come, afford a still more striking manifestation of his perfections, as is amply and beautifully illustrated towards the end of the book of Job. But beyond all creatures man is fitted not merely to be the percipient of the Divine perfections, but to manifest these perfections;

and this he does not simply by that bodily structure which is "fearfully and wonderfully made," nor by those mental faculties which raise him so high above the lower animals, which enable him to recall the past, to anticipate the future, and to approximate the remote, but more particularly by the fall, the redemption, and the whole history of the human race. The first lesson that our church teaches her children is, "The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him for ever;" and it is upon this broad basis that we conceive all sound theology must be built.

Now this leads us to consider the work of man's redemption, not simply with a reference to man alone, but to the whole rational family of God. The election of Israel out of all the tribes of the earth, to be the chosen people of God, will afford us a correct illustration of the choice of the human race as the objects in whom his redeeming power and love might be displayed, from among all the various races that constitute his moral government. The Israelites were not chosen to be the peculiar people of God on account of any superiority that they possessed over the rest of mankind, for they were chosen in Abraham, before they actually existed; so neither were mankind chosen to be the objects of God's redeeming

love on account of any intrinsic merit of their own, for this idea is inconsistent with the fact that they needed redemption, but were chosen in Christ before they were created. The Israelites were not chosen that they alone might enjoy the blessing of God, but that, through them, that blessing might come upon all nations; neither was man chosen to redemption that its blessings might redound to him alone, but "to the intent that unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God. The Israelites were chosen, that unto them God might commit his revelations for the use of all nations: so were men chosen, that in them God might manifest his perfections for the instruction of all his rational creatures. Though many of his chosen Israel perished in their sins and their idolatries, yet the great purposes for which that people was chosen were effectually accomplished: so, though multitudes of the human race perish, yet the designs of God's redeeming love, and the lessons which it is fitted to teach, are not the less effectually accomplished. As the Israelites, though far behind most other nations in arts and sciences, yet taught to the world something infinitely more valuable than aught that art or science were ever capable of

discovering: so the human race, though far inferior to man, other races, yet manifests to all a knowledge of the character and perfections of God, which otherwise they could never have known. And, finally, as the Israelites are destined yet to stand at the very head of the human race, and to be the most glorious of nations: even so the human race, though now so low, is destined to take its place at the head of all the families of God. Human nature is, at this moment, the most glorious of created natures, taken, in its assumption by the Son, into a nearness of union with the Godhead, which none other enjoys; and where our head is, there all his true members shall in due time be. As the man Christ Jesus passed through all suffering into glory, even so his people, exposed to dangers which others never knew, and made triumphant through his Spirit dwelling in them, rise to honours with which others can never be crowned; and, living monuments of all those divine perfections which were displayed in their redemption, living records of the glory of God, they will awaken, among the hosts of heaven, a song which, throughout eternity, will be ever new. In fine, if all things were made for the purpose of manifesting to the creatures the perfections of the Creator, then, above all things with

which we are acquainted, must the work of redemption be designed and fitted for this great end.

In order to see how the human race, in their fall and their redemption, acquire for themselves, and teach to others, this knowledge of the perfection of the Creator, it will be necessary to go back to a period when as yet there was no sin in the dominions of God—when there were none but unfallen beings in existence. Such beings, it is clear, could have but a very limited and defective view of the nature and character of God. From his works they would be able to infer that he was possessed of great wisdom and great power; and, from the happiness they enjoyed, they would be persuaded of his great goodness. But that his wisdom was omniscience—that his power was omnipotence—that his goodness could extend, not merely to the unfallen and unsinning creature, but also to the "unthankful and the evil," they could not by any possibility know. Of his other perfections they could have but very little knowledge, if any at all. They could not tell if he were immutable, when nothing had occurred to put his immutability to the test. For the same reason, they could not tell if he were inflexibly just, unchangeably true, infinitely and unalterably holy. They might

be able to prove, by abstract reasonings, the probability that he possessed these perfections; but these proofs would be just similar in their nature to the proof of the immortality of the soul by Plato or Seneca—a fine speculation, but producing no such conviction as to become a living active principle, to be held fast and acted upon, and carried out to its practical results, at the expense of all that is dear in life, or at the expense of life itself.

These perfections, in order to be fully known, must be seen carried out into actual operation, and operating too, under such circumstances as to prove them to be absolutely infinite. Of his mercy, it is obvious, that they could not possibly have any idea whatever. A large family living under the eye of a father, whom not one of them has ever offended, may have a considerable knowledge of his character; yet that knowledge must be imperfect and defective. They cannot tell to what extent his truth, his justice, his goodness may go; because nothing has occurred which could afford an occasion of trying, of limiting or restraining the exercise of these qualities. But let some individual of the family offend him, and then, in his treatment of that individual, all the rest of the family, as well as the offender himself, will obtain a new view, and

consequently a more extended knowledge of his character. While the prodigal son dwelt beneath his father's roof, he knew well the goodness of his father's heart. But he did not know the whole extent of that goodness. When pining in want and misery, he resolved to return to his father's house,—to be received and treated as a hired servant, and that only on the most lowly confession of his errors, was all the extent to which he dared to hope that his father's goodness could go. But when his return was welcomed with joy and gladness, when he felt his father's embrace, saw himself arrayed in the richest robes, and feasted in the most sumptuous manner, then did he feel convinced that his father possessed a goodness, the existence of which he did not dare previously to believe. Even so the great Father of all, whose prerogative it is to bring good out of evil, hath, out of the ruin of the human race, drawn an exhibition of his own character, from which angels, not less than men, acquire new views and more extended knowledge of it. And as that knowledge constitutes the very end and aim of their being, therefore, though possibly no danger might result to them from our fall, yet their glory and happiness have received, and will

receive, an incalculable augmentation from our redemption.

With the commencement of moral evil, then, whatever was its origin, commenced a new and glorious development of the divine perfections. When part of the angels sinned, and for their sin were doomed to punishment, being driven out from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, then God was seen in a new relation, and an additional view of his character would be given. Something would be known of him, that was not known before. But then this knowledge, like most other pieces of knowledge in intelligent minds, would give rise to some doubts, and to questions not easy to be solved. Some illustration of God's displeasure against sin, and of his power to punish it would be given; and they would feel that even though possessed of angelic excellence, they must obey or suffer. But then they would, for the first time know sin, of which before its actual existence among them, they probably had not even an idea. And that idea would necessarily be attended with a painful feeling,*—the feeling

* This is perhaps too strongly expressed. We can scarcely conceive of perfectly holy beings subject to *painful* feelings of insecurity. The same objection may, perhaps, be urged against some previous expressions, in which it is

of insecurity. The offenders, it is true, were driven out, but they now knew, what probably they knew not before, that they were liable to sin and to punishment; and we may easily conceive how such a knowledge would affect their happiness. Their perfect and unsuspicious confidence in, and reliance upon each other, would be abated. The same cause that had already introduced sin among them, might produce the same effect again, and by successive defections, the throne of God might be left without a worshipper. And it would naturally occur to them to inquire, how it happened that sin could enter into the dominions of God at all? If he were perfectly holy, then must he hate sin; and if he were omniscient and omnipotent, why did he not foresee and prevent that, which, as holy, he must hate? And these are questions, to the solution of which, there is no reason to suppose that they could make any

represented as *impossible* for creatures to know any thing of the attributes of God, except by seeing their operations; since it is manifest that God could make himself known by direct revelation. The main idea, however, is undoubtedly correct in both cases. The attributes of God are chiefly known by being seen in actual operation, and every new exhibition of his immutability, and his goodness, would give a new feeling of security, and additional happiness to his holy creatures. The bible itself in making known to us *what God is*, accomplishes the end chiefly by relating *what he does*.—(Editor.)

thing like a near approach. Hence painful fears and doubts would be the result of the first appearance of sin in heaven.

When they saw man made, a part of their fears would be removed. They would see that there could be no room to fear, that though all angels should rebel, "heaven should want inhabitants, or God want praise." But the first step in the providence of God, the fall of man, would bring back all their fears with increased pressure. Was God really so little able to resist the rebels, that he could not uphold his own fair workmanship from being led away captive by them? When they saw Satan become the god of this world, would not the power, and other perfections of God stand greatly in doubt? The sons of God shouted for joy when man was made; and that shout was expressive, not simply of adoration at seeing a new exhibition of their Maker's power, but also of the delight which they felt at having, by this exhibition of his power, so many of those fears removed, which the entrance of sin had awakened. And proportioned to the delight which they felt, and expressed at man's creation, would necessarily be the consternation with which they beheld his fall. And when they heard it declared that man, though fallen, and taken captive by Satan, yet was

not to be lost, what would be the result of such a declaration? Just new doubts, and new fears. They would naturally ask, what new thing is this? or how can it possibly be? When angels fell they were driven away in their wickedness, and no hope of restoration was held out to them; yet they still possessed so much power as to have carried away man into rebellion, and now he is not to die, even after the sentence denounced, "In the day thou eatest thou shalt surely die."* Was God to prove himself regardless of his truth, by recalling the sentence so solemnly pronounced? Was he to abandon his own holy law to violation, and his authority to contempt, by extending mercy to the transgressors? Was the majesty of the divine government to be insulted with impunity? and was the holiness of God to stoop to hold communion with that which was polluted? In short, was God to prove that immutability formed no part of his character? If he was destitute of any one of these perfections, or if he possessed any one of them only in a limited degree, and if angels were about to see that limit reached, then their

* Adam did die on the day that he sinned, and angels knew this. But this just increased the difficulty, for how were creatures already dead in sin to be revived and restored?

happiness was gone. His immutability stood most in doubt, and most of all was it necessary that they should be well assured of this. For what other security had they for the continuance of their happiness, than just this, that he who had made them, and bestowed that happiness upon them, was a being who could not change? Let this once be made doubtful, and then, in addition to the feeling of insecurity arising from a sense of their own liability to sin, they would experience the still more painful feeling of insecurity derived from the mutability of the divine character.

But then how could man be pardoned and saved, without all these painful consequences being the result? God had most positively declared, that on the day in which he transgressed he should die. Could that sentence be reversed, or even its execution suspended, without creating some question as to how far his truth might be relied upon? If the law of God was violated, and the authority of God trampled upon, with not merely impunity, but with favour to the transgressor, was not this in effect to abrogate that law? Even under the Christian dispensation, which so awfully demonstrates the sanctity of the law, how difficult is it to prevent men from "turning the grace of God into lasciviousness," and from

sinning, "because grace abounds?" But had God forgiven men, without any demonstration of the holiness, and the unalterable nature of the law, this would have been just to set open a flood gate for the introduction of all iniquity. That God could, by a mere act of power, or, as it ought rather to be called in this case, of *force*, have rescued the sinner from the grasp of Satan, and have created him anew, and have reinstated him in higher happiness than that from which he fell, may be perfectly true. But what then became of his moral attributes? Who among his unfallen children, could have in this case avoided the conclusion that he was an unholy, an unjust, a mutable, nay, a capricious being? And such an act of power, while it might have been an act of great mercy towards the guilty, would at the same time have been an act of great cruelty towards the innocent.

We are often told that it is an easy thing for God to forgive sin—that there is nothing to prevent him from withdrawing his right to punish the guilty, and that such an act of grace would highly illustrate his goodness, and awaken songs of praise among both angels and men. Nothing, however, can well be more evident than the truth of the very reverse of this. Among men such an act of grace

would have been, and could have been productive of nothing else than the most unbridled licentiousness; and among angels of nothing but consternation and dismay; and an act of mercy so exercised would have defeated all the purposes of mercy. Every sinner thus rescued by an act of omnipotent power, not from the grasp of Satan, but from the sentence of God's most holy law, would have been just a new monument of a mutable God, and of a despised law, and instead of being hailed on his entrance into heaven with songs of joy, would have been received with expressions of jealousy and fear. It is easy, it is said, for God to depart from his right to punish; but by whom is this said? By men who have never been convicted of sin, who know not how exceedingly *sinful* a thing it is, who know nothing of the extent and spirituality of the law of God, and have never felt their need of and dependence upon a Saviour. Ask you the awakened sinner who has felt the terrors of the law coming like water into his bowels, and like oil into his bones, if *he* thinks it an easy thing for God to forgive sin? He will tell you that when a violated law set all his sins in array before him, and when conscience confirmed the sentence of the law, so far was he from thinking it an easy thing for God to for-

give his sins, that hardly all the grace manifested in the Gospel could persuade him to believe it possible, that even with God there was an extent of mercy sufficient to forgive his sins; that while he felt no difficulty in believing the general proposition, that with God there is mercy for sinners, he feels that nothing but a divine power could have enabled him to apply the general proposition to his own particular case, and to believe that there was mercy in God sufficient for *him*. It is easy, we are told, and told often, for God, by a mere act of grace to pardon, and by a mere act of power to regenerate and save sinners. It is easy for him to forego his right to punish the transgressor. But it is not seen, nor, save by the awakened sinner, can be seen, that, in so doing, he foregoes all the inflexibility of his justice, all the sacredness of his truth, all the sanctity of his law, all the spotless purity of his holiness, and all the majesty of his government, and his destroying all the security that is founded on the immutability of his character. Moreover, the pardon of sin, without any manifestation of its hatefulness, or of the perfections of God, would have brought both his wisdom and his power into question. For surely it would have exhibited much more of both to sustain man from falling at all, than to leave him to fall, merely

in order to rescue him from its effects, by an exercise of power put forth at the expense of all his moral attributes; while all the lessons taught by the work of Redemption, for the sake of which the world was made, and man upon it, would not only have been entirely lost, but it would have been impossible to determine why some men were saved, and others left to perish—why grace was offered to one fallen race, and none offered to another; and it would indeed have been a question which defied solution, for what one useful purpose could such a being as man possibly have been made? The Jews erred grievously when they supposed that the dispensation, of which they were the recipients, terminated in themselves, and was given them, not for the sake, but to the exclusion of all other nations. And we carry the same error to a much more pernicious extent, and still more effectually mar the glory of the work of redemption, when we consider that work as terminating in man—when we consider ourselves as an insulated race, and not as beings intimately connected with, and made for the sake of all the rational family of God. Had no nation been to be blessed but the Jews, the Jews would never have been chosen; and had no being been to profit by the work of redemption but man, it seems impossible to

conceive one rational purpose that could be answered, by such a creature as man being made at all.

It was then when it was declared that fallen man should be saved, and when it appeared not how that salvation could be effected without the most disastrous consequences to the whole universe, without casting doubt and distrust upon all the perfections of God, and upon all the principles of his divine government, that the great mystery of Redemption, into which angels desire to look, and from which they learn wisdom, began to run its mighty course. It was then that the eternal Word was announced as the Saviour of the fallen race, who should rescue them from their thraldom, in a way which should not only cast no doubt over the perfections of God, but should afford the most glorious illustration of all these perfections,—who should not only reconcile, but continue in the most indissoluble union, these apparently most irreconcilable things, the glory of God, and the safety of sinful men —who should unite, in most harmonious agreement, these apparent contraries, the mercy that pleaded for the sinner's safety, with the truth which demanded his punishment, the righteousness that condemned him, with the peace that was promised him. The Son was

announced as the Prophet, Priest, and King of the human race, and the first acts belonging to all these characters he performed personally. He, as prophet, announced to man the hope of deliverance through the "woman's seed." As priest he appointed sacrifices as typical of his own death for sinners, and clothed our first parents with the skins of slain beasts instead of their own fig leaves, as a token that he would cover their spiritual nakedness by the perfection of his own righteousness.* And as a king he sent them forth to cultivate the ground until they should return to the dust whence they came. These offices, thus formally and personally undertaken by the Son, were thenceforth delegated to his representatives, till the fulness of time should arrive for his coming in the flesh. To what extent the knowledge of men or of angels, as to the nature of these offices might then go, we have no means of ascertaining; but this we know, that at that period commenced, and, in the evolution of the work of Redemption, was gradually unfolded, for the instruction of both,

* This may appear rather a wild interpretation of this transaction. If so, it is only the more suitable for the present age. However, we should hardly, perhaps, have ventured to put it down, had we not seen it sanctioned by some sober and able writers; among others by Benson, in his Hulsean lectures on Scripture Difficulties.

an exhibition of the glory of God's perfections, of the majesty of God's government, and of the sanctity of God's law, far beyond aught that could have been derived either from the sinless obedience, or the endless punishment of all created beings.

It may perhaps be said, that a considerable portion of what we have now been stating, rests upon no better a foundation than conjecture, and consequently, however plausible it may be, cannot be relied on as certainly true. But we think that, on a very little consideration, all that we have assumed, at least all that is in any way essential to our view, will be readily granted. It will, we suppose, be granted that the invisible and incomprehensible God, who dwelleth in unapproachable light, can be known to angels, only in the same way in which he is known to us, namely, by the contemplation of his works and ways ; and that his perfections could be very imperfectly known, till they were seen in actual exercise. It will, we suppose, be farther admitted, that angels are just as deeply interested as we are, in seeing the perfections of God vindicated from all the doubt and suspicion which were attached to them by the entrance of sin into his dominions. And if, finally, it be admitted that nothing that we know, or can form any con-

ception of, forms so glorious a manifestation of the perfections of God, as the work of man's Redemption, and that that work was designed by God for this very purpose, then we see not that we have assumed any thing that can be denied. If on any minor point our readers differ from us, we can have no dispute with them on the subject, for it affects not our general views.

We hold it indisputable that before the Incarnation, when Christ came personally to execute the offices of prophet, priest, and king, as far as the execution of them on earth was necessary, the angels had a much clearer view of the nature of the work which he came to do, than men had. For that work, being intended for their benefit as well as ours, was doubtless to them the object of most interesting study; and though no revelation of its nature had been made to them, beyond what was made to man, and we know of no reason to suppose that there was, yet we take it for granted that they understood much better than men, the meaning of the types and shadows of the preparatory dispensations, and the predictions of the prophets. But still, though they understood better than men what Christ was about to do on earth, they could have but a very imperfect and inadequate conception of it till they saw it actually done.

Let us then consider what Christ came to do in the flesh; and this will lead us at once to see, both the necessity of the Incarnation, and also the necessity that, when he took flesh, it should be not *sinful* flesh, but flesh completely and totally alienated from all sinfulness. He came, as we have already stated, to execute the offices of prophet, priest and king.

CHRIST OUR PROPHET.

Let us look then to Christ as our prophet. His duty in the discharge of this office, was to reveal unto us the Father, as he saith, "Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him," and again it is said, "No man hath seen God at any time, the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Now how did Christ reveal to us the Father? Not by any set proofs of his existence, nor by any abstract discussions upon his nature or character, nor by didactic discourses, but by action; a mode of instruction as level to the comprehension of the meanest capacity, as to that of the loftiest, as intelligible to the peasant as to the philosopher. He taught us, for example, that God is holy. But how did he do this? Not by any set dissertations on the holiness of God, but by the unceasing and spotless holi-

ness of his own conduct. Never were allurements more enticing than those by which he was sometimes solicited, and never were trials more severe than those to which he was commonly exposed, and never were testimonies so numerous, unequivocal, and decisive, as those by which it is proved that by no allurement was he ever enticed, by no trial was he ever pressed into a deviation, or into the manifestation of a wish to deviate, from the path of duty. Not only could he himself challenge his bitterest foes to convince him of sin, but the testimony of his friends and foes alike concurs to assure us that he "did no sin," and that in his mouth guile was not found. In the same manner he teaches us that God is good, not by any regular proofs of this in his discourses, but by the constant exhibition of it in his practice. When the infirm and the distressed applied to him, the application was never made in vain. He never said to the applicant, you are of too abandoned a character for notice, and richly deserve all the misery you endure, or, your disease is of too desperate a nature, or of too long standing to admit of relief. No, but his language was, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." And while he was literally fulfilling the prediction which thus spoke of the blessings of his coming,—

"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped: then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing;" he was, in so doing, giving proof of his power and his readiness to give a far higher accomplishment to this happy prediction, by healing the spiritual diseases, of which those of the body were only feeble, however painful symptoms. And when he went about doing good, and healing all manner of disease, we are expressly taught that the design of his so doing was to lead men to apply to him for blessings of a higher order, and to convince them of his power and readiness to confer these blessings. Thus, when the scribes murmured at hearing him say to the man who was sick of the palsy, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee," he asked them, "Whether is it easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise and walk?" very plainly intimating that he who had the power and the will to do the one, had no less the power and the will to do the other, a truth which he proceeded still more directly to teach, saying,—"But that *ye may know* that the Son of man hath power on earth *to forgive sins*, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." Here ability to command the sick man to arise

and walk, is, by our Lord himself, adduced as a convincing proof of his power to forgive sin.

Now, he who exhibited this unceasing holiness, and this unlimited goodness, was God with us, "God manifest in the flesh." And such as he was in the world, even such is God. If we wish to know the character of God, we shall find it revealed there, where the life of Jesus is recorded. Hence, the following most distinct language is used by our Lord himself on this subject: "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, show us the Father?" Hence, too, when we are called upon to combat the fears that take possession of the awakened soul, and the arguments which ignorance and unbelief raise up, in the heart of the convinced sinner, against faith and hope, we find the record of our Saviour's life a good and an efficient ground, on which they may be combated. We just say to the sinner under these circumstances, He, whose goodness was so unlimited, was God manifested in the flesh, and manifested there

that we might see with our own eyes, and have the most perfect knowledge of the gracious dispositions of God toward us. If you say that you admit the general proposition, that there is mercy with God for sinners, but dare not specifically apply the proposition to your own individual case, and hope that there is mercy for *you*, then we say that you are negativing not only his manifold and gracious declarations, whereby he encourages the weary and the heavy laden to come to him, that they may find peace and rest; but you are negativing the import of the lesson taught by the whole course of his conduct. For, from that exercise of inconceivable goodness which he manifested when, leaving the glory which he had with the Father before the world began, he condescended to become obnoxious to every suffering that human nature knows, in that flesh which he took into personal union with himself, down to that other equally inconceivable exercise of goodness which he manifested when he bowed his head and gave up the ghost, giving his own life for that of a lost world, what one act in the whole course of his earthly existence is not in most perfect accordance with the grace and the goodness which distinguished alike its commencement and its close? What wretch ever applied to him and was sent away unrelieved? Whom

did he ever ask, by what right, or on the ground of what merit they laid claim to his interposition in their favour? Whom did he ever reproach with the guilt that had brought their miseries upon them? If he healed the sick, and raised the dead, if out of one he cast seven devils, and dispossessed another of a whole legion, it was just for the purpose of convincing you that there is no limit either to his power or his willingness to heal your spiritual sickness, to quicken you from your death in sin. He asks no question as to the past. He asks not if you be loaded with the sins of a few days, or with the sins of many years. He asks not if your crimes be few or many, slight or aggravated. They all lie equally within the compass of his power; and his only question is, "Wilt thou be made whole?" If, for a moment he refused the woman of Syrophenicia, it was only to teach you the happy effect of persevering and importunate prayer. If he refused her for a moment, it was only the more emphatically to teach this truth, that he will never refuse,—that *whosoever* cometh unto him shall not be denied.

In the same manner was the holiness of God displayed in the life of him in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And if the life of Christ was just a living manifestation of all the perfections of God, and if we know

God, just because God has dwelt in the flesh amongst us, then is it obvious, not merely that the Son who became our prophet to reveal unto us the Father, must of necessity become flesh, since in no other way that we know could he make that revelation; but it is not less obviously necessary that the flesh which he took should be perfectly holy, else it is not conceivable how his life could afford us any exhibition of the holiness of God. He might have showed to us the holiness of a man, such as Abraham or Moses, carried to a still higher degree of perfection, even to the extent of avoiding all actual transgression of the law of God. But if his flesh was really sinful, if it even felt the slightest propensity or inclination to sin,—an inclination which required to be repressed, in order to prevent it from proceeding to actual guilt, then this propensity was itself, at least in our view of the matter, criminal, and effectually disqualified him for giving any practical revelation of the divine holiness in his life. The inclination of his flesh to sinful indulgence might be in him kept as "a spring shut up, and a fountain sealed," from which no emanation of actual guilt was ever permitted to proceed. The inclination of the flesh might be so powerfully and successfully repressed, that it might be truly said of him in whom it dwelt, that he

"*did* no sin;" but with what truth it could be said of him, whose whole life was an unceasing, however successful struggle, against the will of the flesh, compelling "the flesh *against* its will," into however perfect a harmony with the will of God, that he "*knew* no sin," is altogether beyond our comprehension. If such inclination existed, however successfully subdued, it existed as the germ of all actual transgression,—as containing in it the elements of all human guilt,—as the object of just wrath, and deserved punishment,—as that which can be rendered fit for communion with God, only through that shedding of blood, without which there can be no remission, and consequently totally depriving him in whom it existed, of all claim to the title, and of all power to accomplish the purposes, of a "Lamb without blemish, and without spot."

But in order to see all the fulness with which he discharged the duties resulting from his prophetic character, and to learn from his discharge of them all, the knowledge which it is intended and fitted to convey, we must look, not merely to his life, but still more especially to his death. He was a prophet on the cross, as well as a "priest on the throne," and not the less a king on both. And whatever knowledge of the perfections of God we derive from the life of Christ, is both carried out to a great-

er extent, and taught with a more impressive emphasis, by his death.

By his life we are taught that God is good, and the sinner is powerfully encouraged to come to him for pardon and for peace. But it was on the cross that he gave the highest exhibition of the Divine goodness. To all his creatures the goodness of God was known; but to none of them was the infinite and inconceivable extent of that goodness known, till Christ died on the cross. When man fell, had God freely forgiven the rebel, and by a word restored him to perfect purity, and placed him in a state of impeccable stability, this would have been an act of unexampled goodness. But as this act could by no possibility be performed, without throwing doubt on the Divine perfections, and producing the most disastrous consequences, the next and only method which created reason could have suggested for the treatment of the rebels would be, to give up the fallen pair to him to whose suggestions they had listened, in opposition to the command of God,—cut off the stream of iniquity by drying up its source, and people the world anew with less feeble creatures. But when they heard of the Incarnation, when they heard that the Eternal Word, who spoke the world into being, was himself to be made flesh, and in the weakness

of flesh was to go forth into that world of which Satan had become the god, and to meet him in his own domain, and to contend with him and all his powers on his own ground, and by his own deeds and his own sufferings, to take away the captives of the mighty, and to redeem the prey of the terrible, and when they saw all this actually accomplished, then had they a view of the goodness of God, far beyond aught that they could possibly have had before. When they saw God willing to redeem from their captivity, and to ransom from destruction, creatures, whose utter and final perdition could not have affected his happiness or glory, with no less a price than the blood of his own well-beloved Son, it is no matter of surprise that they, delighted thus to be assured of the infinite extent of the goodness of their God, should, as well as the redeemed from among men, celebrate the death of Christ, in the most exalted strains of gratitude and adoration, as we are assured by John in the Revelation that they do, when he says, "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of *many angels* round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches,

and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And *every creature* which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever."* And well might the same writer, when contemplating the goodness of God, as it is set forth in the unspeakable value of the price by which he purchased our safety, thus speak of it, "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."† The love of God is indeed thus manifested to be something, the extent of which no language may describe, and no heart may conceive: and the redeemed of the Lord, while throughout eternity his love flows forth to them in an ever-increasing weight of glory and blessedness, will feel no misgivings lest he who thus blesseth them should grow weary in the exercise of his love, and should come to a limit, beyond which they shall not go in its

* Rev. v. 11. † 1 John iv. 9.

enjoyment, while they can ever look back to the cross of Christ, where the death of our Prophet gave an ineffaceable and irrefragable demonstration that the love of God is truly boundless, exhaustless, and passing all understanding.

Now, we would ask, is it possible that the life of Christ, clear, and distinct, and decisive as are the manifestations of the love and goodness of God which it affords, could have manifested that love and goodness, to as great an extent, or have given so impressive and indubitable a demonstration of them as that which we derive from his death? Every reader will, we suppose, answer, No. It was in his whole life, but still more especially and emphatically, in his death, that our great Prophet revealed unto us the Father. Then he died as a prophet, not less than as a priest; or, in other words, it was from his death as a sacrifice to expiate our sins, that we derive the highest instruction, which, as our prophet, he came to teach us. We beg our readers to keep this observation in mind, that, even as our Prophet, it was necessary that Christ should die, and not less necessary that his death should be that of an unfallen, sinless person.

In the meantime we go on to remark, that this demonstration of the love of God, which

was given in the death of Christ, becomes much more distinct and impressive, when viewed in connection with that demonstration of the exceedingly hateful and malignant nature of sin, which was given by the same event. When sin was first introduced into the dominions of God, some demonstration of its evil was given in the punishment inflicted on the offenders. That demonstration, however, was comparatively trifling. In them it was not immediately punished to the full extent of its demerit, nor consequently the full extent of its evil shown. And had these first offenders been at once, and frankly forgiven, could this by any possibility have been done, it would have afforded a comparatively trifling manifestation of the grace of God. Before that grace could be seen in all its glory, sin must be first seen in all its malignity. And this could not be seen merely by the fall of angels. One of its most awful characteristics, their fall could not show. We refer to its generative nature, —its capability of being propagated from race to race through successive generations. Whatever number of angels there were who kept not their first state, each fell by his own personal act, and to however many other sins that first sin might give rise in the individual, this was only a proof that sin once admitted into the heart

would propagate itself there; but could give no idea of another fact, which far more fearfully demonstrates the malignity of sin, namely, that sin might be committed under such circumstances, as would render it just in God to cause the poison of that sin to pass from the actual transgressor to unnumbered millions of other responsible creatures, connected in a particular manner with the transgressor, so as to involve them all in his guilt and in his doom. Till man fell, and the result of his fall was seen, it could not be known that such was the malignity of sin, that one sin of one man, was sufficient to diffuse guilt and misery through all generations of men. One sin thus committed, under circumstances which afforded it an opportunity for producing all its natural and proper effects, gave a much more impressive view of its native malignity, than the fall of angels could possibly do. Many proofs of the hatefulness of sin have been given, such as the sweeping away of a guilty world by the flood, —the sudden destruction of the "cities of the plain,"—the devotion of the Amorites to extermination, when the measure of their iniquities was full. And all the madness, and folly, and guilt, and misery, that abound on earth, and every sin, and every sorrow of every individual, when viewed, as it ought always to be, in connexion

with the original source whence it sprung, are all affecting and convincing proofs—proofs coming home to the bosom of every man who is capable of feeling—how "evil a thing and bitter sin is," while they are proving that the "evil figment" of man's heart, "the root of bitterness," is at this day as vigorous and fresh, and flourishing, and fruitful as it was at the beginning; and while they are showing how one sin of one man, when committed under circumstances favourable to the development of its proper effects, is capable of resulting in the actual guilt and temporal suffering of all, and in the final condemnation of many.

And when this demonstration of the malignity of sin has been for ages exhibited to the examination of men and angels, when we have seen one sin spreading its contamination over a whole world, and over all generations of men, and showing its poison in the production of a guilt and misery that baffles all calculation and all conception, is this demonstration, overwhelming though it be, the most painful exhibition of the "exceeding sinfulness of sin," which God hath given to angels and to men? No. There is a demonstration more striking still. His only-begotten Son is sent forth to teach us this, among other things, that the holiness of God is something far beyond all con-

ception,—that his aversion to sin is wholly unalterable,—and that, in short, there is a hatefulness in sin, which we can no more comprehend, than we can comprehend the perfections of God. We have seen the effects of one sin, and these are disastrous beyond all calculation. But the death of our Divine Prophet must be supposed to afford a demonstration even beyond this, else it would not have been given. When angels saw him, whom they were accustomed to worship, go forth into the world in the "*likeness* of sinful flesh"—when they saw him take upon him the penalty due to the sins of a lost world,—when they saw him undertake to pay a debt of such incalculable magnitude, they would be ready to say, surely it is sufficient that he has had goodness enough to undertake for these fallen creatures! The debt will not be, in reality exacted; the penalty will not be unsparingly inflicted upon the only-begotten and well-beloved Son. A little may be exacted in order to prove the reality of his suretyship,—a little may be inflicted to prove the reality of his substitution; but surely the whole will never be either required or inflicted He will spare the Son. But no, not one pang due to our guilt was withheld, not one drop of gall which guilt had mingled in our cup, was abstracted from his. "The Lord

hath laid on him the iniquities of us all;" and he is able to forgive every sin, because there is no sin, the bitterness resulting from which he did not feel to the full. And this is what constitutes his death so awful, and solemn, and impressive a demonstration, beyond all other demonstrations, of the inconceivable holiness of God, and of the unspeakable hatefulness of sin, that though he on whom our iniquities were laid was the well-beloved Son, yet not one pang due to guilt was spared him.

We have already said that the demonstration of the unspeakable grace and goodness of God, which was given in the death of Christ, would appear still more conspicuously when viewed in connection with the demonstration of the exceeding "sinfulness of sin," derived from the same event. For if such be the hatefulness of sin, that, even when the Son took our sins upon him, not one pang due to them was spared him, then how great is the goodness of God in providing a ransom, and such a ransom, for creatures so deeply involved in all its pollution and hatefulness! Well might the apostle say, "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we

were yet sinners, Christ died for us."* And well might he also say, as he does in the same chapter, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." For if such be the malignity of sin, that one sin of one man was sufficient to involve the whole human race in guilt and condemnation, how great is that grace of God, which forgives not one sin of one man, but innumerable sins of innumerable men!

As the death of a fallen and sinful creature could be no demonstration whatever of the grace and goodness of God, so neither could it be any greater a demonstration of the malignity of sin than our own death If then Christ was a fallen sinful creature, if there existed in any department of his constitution the slightest portion of that abominable thing which God hates, if he died merely by the "common property of flesh to die, because it was accursed in the loins of our first parents," or because he had taken a portion of the "perilous stuff," then his death, instead of being the most awful and solemn exhibition of the holiness of God, and of the sinfulness of sin," which men or angels ever saw, was just such a common exhibition of these, as we have the advantage of

* Rom. v. 7.

seeing every day, in the death of other fallen sinful creatures.

Hence then we again come to the conclusion, that the death of Christ was necessary to the full discharge of his prophetic office. He died that he might teach us the important and necessary lesson, that there is an inconceivable, that is, to us, an infinite malignity in sin—that there is in God an inconceivable holiness and hatred of sin,—and that sin can never be forgiven without being first atoned for. And we come also to the conclusion that this lesson could not be taught by the death of a sinful creature, in any higher degree than it is taught by the death of those who are daily dying around us, and consequently that our prophet who died to teach us this was not a sinful creature.

We might make similar remarks upon the Truth and the Justice of God, from the illustrations of which, given in the death of our prophet, the same conclusion that he was not sinful or fallen, might be drawn. We shall, however, remark upon no other of the divine perfections, save his Immutability, as the knowledge of this is, in itself, most necessary, and includes, in some measure, both his Justice and Truth. Of the existence of this perfection the history of the world affords many

striking illustrations. Many things occurred to induce God, if change with him had been possible, to change his purpose of grace and mercy to a fallen world. The history of the antediluvian ages shows us men, not, as might have been expected, mourning over the dismal consequences of the fall, and walking in all the humility of deep penitence before the God whom they had offended, and cherishing with feelings of heartfelt gratitude the happy hopes which he had graciously held out to them; but, on the contrary, devoted to every species of wickedness, and carrying their guilt to such an extent as to render it necessary to sweep away the whole race. Yet even in the infliction of this terrible judgment, he, in the midst of wrath, remembered mercy, and preserved one family, that through them the promise that the woman's seed should bruise the serpent's head might be fulfilled, and the immutability of his purpose might be manifested.

Again, when Israel was chosen, that to that nation might be committed the "oracles of God," and that they might be placed under a dispensation preparatory to the coming of the promised Messiah, how constantly did they prove themselves to be truly a stiff-necked and rebellious people! Not all the wonders which they saw in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the

wilderness, not their own constant experience of the happiness of obedience, and the miserable consequences of rebellion, in short, nothing could turn them away from their idolatries. How often had God to give them into the hands of their enemies! But nothing could induce him to cast them off. Their unbelief could not make his faithfulness of none effect. "I am Jehovah! I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Notwithstanding all their provocations, therefore, they were still preserved till the promise was fulfilled, and the "Consolation of Israel" sent.

And even now, that for the rejection of the Messiah, they have been for many ages sifted like wheat among all nations, still the same immutability which performed former promises, will fulfil that which teacheth us to hope, that the veil shall yet be taken away from the hearts of that people, when Israel shall turn unto the Lord and be saved.

That God persevered, in the accomplishment of a purpose which every thing in the history of the world in general, and of his own chosen people in particular, strongly provoked him to abandon, is a great and impressive proof of his immutability. But a still greater was wanted, and the greatest that can possibly be conceived is given in the death of Christ.

When all our iniquities were laid on him, and the penalty of them all was exacted of him, will not God relax a little of the firmness of his purpose? When he beholds the agonies which rend his spotless soul with unutterable anguish, when he hears his strong cryings, and sees his tears, and the shrinking and shuddering of nature, not at the thought of death, but of that hour and power of darkness by which death was preceded, when the malice of men, and the power of Satan, and the curse of a broken law, were all let loose against him, will not God, under such circumstances as these, relent in favour of his well-beloved Son? Will he not interfere to confound the malice of men, to wither up the power of Satan, to abate the demands of the law? Will he not now change, or at least somewhat modify the purpose which declared that thus it must be? No. He will not change *now*, and thus gives the most decisive proof that never on any occasion can he change. Even when the pains of hell got hold of his well-beloved Son, and the sorrows of death encompassed him around, and he found trouble and sorrow such as mortal man may never adequately conceive, yet God manifested no variableness and no shadow of turning. If he had, what would have been the consequence? A God capable of change, and go-

verning by a law which had been violated, without its demands being fully satisfied, and its penalty fully inflicted, would have been the object presented to the view of angels, and an object which, it is obvious, they could never have contemplated without terror and alarm. Never was immutability put to such an awful test, and never was result so glorious, and never could conviction be deeper than that which was impressed upon the hosts of heaven, that in God they could never henceforth dread any change. And the powers of darkness know that God, who withdrew not his well-beloved Son from one pang that the imputed guilt of an apostate world entitled them to inflict upon him, until he was enabled to say, "It is finished," is a God who cannot change. And the believer in Jesus knows that the God who gave up his Son to die for him, is a God who cannot change, and rejoices to know that if God hath chosen him to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, there is then nothing in heaven above, or in hell beneath, that can separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. And let the thoughtless, heedless, careless sinner know, that God can never change; that his threatenings are as unalterable as his promises. He is pleasing himself, it may be, in some vague,

undefined, and unfounded reliance in the uncovenanted mercies of God; and is soothing down the alarms of conscience by saying—God is merciful. And merciful he is, beyond what heart can conceive, but merciful to those only who seek his mercy in the appointed way. He thinks perhaps that a few prayers and tears wrung from him at the last trying hour, may prevail on a being so merciful, to save him from the fearful and irreversible doom denounced against sinners. But look to the cross of Christ. He spared not his own Son, and will he spare thee, as if he loved thee better than him? He abated not one iota of the demands of the law in the case of his own well-beloved Son, and will he abate its demands for thee? With unchanging and unaltering purpose he said of him, "Awake, Oh sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow." And hopest thou that the sword that was made so sharp to him, shall be sheathed for thee? Thou hopest for impossibilities. Away with the delusive, the destructive hope, and flee to him in whom alone safety is to be found.

Again, then, we come to the conclusion, that Christ died as our Prophet, that he might reveal to us, among other things, the *immutability* of God. For his death put that immuta-

bility to a test which proves this characteristic to be truly infinite, and which can leave to neither the sinner nor the saint, the fallen angels, nor those that surround his throne, either the hope, or the fear of change. And again we also conclude, that to him, from whose death we learn the immutability of God, the terms *fallen*, and *sinful*, never could, with truth, be applied. For where was the mighty test of immutability in giving up such a being to death? Or what could we have learned of the character of God at all from his death, more than from the death of other men? We can produce the most irresistible proof of every particular in this proposition,—"God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable, in being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth? But remove the cross of Christ, from which alone the proof is derived, or make it the cross of a fallen, sinful man, and we are again plunged into all the uncertainty of those speculations upon the being and attributes of God, the only effect of which has been to show, that unaided reason could never draw any satisfactory conclusion upon the subject, from the kingdom either of nature or of providence—that as the sun can be discovered only by his own light, so God can be known only by his own revelation.

I have dwelt the longer on the prophetic office of Christ, for the purpose of showing that to the due discharge of the duties peculiar to that office, his death, and, consequently, his Incarnation, was not less necessary, than for the purpose of making atonement for sin, or for the discharge of the duties of his sacerdotal office. To the latter our attention is commonly more particularly directed, when speaking of the Incarnation and death of our Redeemer.

I have dwelt the longer on his prophetic character too, for the purpose of leading us to a principle which it is of the utmost importance to keep constantly in view, in all discussions on such topics, and indeed in all theological discussions, namely, that, in Christ, the prophetic, sacerdotal, and regal offices were never divided. His every act must be viewed in its prophetic, sacerdotal, and regal aspects, before its full importance can be seen. This principle I shall take some pains to establish. But it will be more easily done when I have made such remarks as the subject requires on the other offices of Christ.

Let us not, in passing, neglect the more striking and important practical bearings of this subject. I have already had occasion to show, that the death of our Prophet very distinctly

teaches us, that such is the goodness of God, that there is no extent of guilt which he is not willing to pardon, and, therefore, that there is no sinner who may not venture to come to the throne of grace. I have also shown how the same event proves, that to hope for salvation, excepting through an union with Christ, is to hope that God will overturn the whole principles of his moral government, and render the whole scheme of redemption, and all that it cost the Saviour to accomplish it, a mere nullity; and that, for the purpose of sparing the sinner the trouble of denying himself, and abandoning his sins. I would now further remark, that the death of our Prophet distinctly teaches us to what extent our obedience to God must be carried. His command is, that we should be ready to lay down our lives for the brethren, and should 'resist even unto blood, striving against sin.' His own practice goes to the full extent of his precept. He obeyed even unto death. He has thus cut off every excuse that can possibly be made for a limited obedience.

Whether then we look to the communication of theological truth, or to the illustration and enforcement of practical principle, it is plain that our instruction would have been altogether defective, had not our Prophet died. Had his

obedience been limited to something short of death, then we would have felt encourged to set a limit, and that a much narrower limit, to our own obedience. But if even death, in its most fearful form, did not authorize the Son to decline from the path of obedience, then his every pang impresses upon our hearts the lesson, that when God commands, there is no plea, however plausible, that can possibly be admitted as an excuse for neglecting to obey; that though obedience should lead us through a fiery furnace, or a lion's den, the example of him who obeyed through sufferings more fearful by far than either, infallibly assures us, that no argument can apologize for our turning back when God calls us to go forward. When a man begins to inquire, not how he may most effectually obey God, but within how narrow limits he may venture to contract his obedience; when he begins to ask, not what is right, but what is expedient, let him look to the cross of Christ, and either renounce such principles, or renounce the name of Christian.

CHRIST OUR PRIEST.

Let us now direct our attention to the Sacerdotal office. The great duties of a priest are to make atonement for the sins of the people, and to offer up intercessions for them. It

is clearly necessary that he who thus appears before God, in behalf of the people, must himself be perfectly holy. Under the law no person could be found possessed of this perfect holiness, but the utmost care was taken to render the Levitical High Priest, as far as possible, a striking type of Christ in this respect. He was required to be perfectly free from all bodily defect and deformity. He was to be born of a mother who had been, not a widow, but a virgin, when married to his father. He was consecrated to his office by ceremonies of the most solemn kind. He wore upon his forehead a golden plate, on which was graven, "like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD." He was not permitted to mourn, as other men, for those that died, nor to contract any ceremonial uncleanness even for his father or his mother. And on the great day of atonement, when he entered into the sanctuary, he prepared himself for the solemnity, by offering first an atonement for himself. Thus the utmost degree of ceremonial holiness was conferred upon him, that he might be a type of the immaculate holiness of our great High Priest.

That Christ made atonement for his people, and intercedes for them, we need not stop to prove. But there are two points upon which

a few remarks are necessary—the one is, that wherever atonement is made, it is made by sacrificial blood-shedding; and the other is, that to offer this sacrifice was the peculiar province of the priest. In proof of the first of these positions, we might refer to the whole Levitical ceremony. We might go still farther back, and refer to the sacrifice of Abel, as a proof that expiatory sacrifice was instituted by God, from the beginning. At present, however, we shall produce only two texts, which seem sufficiently decisive on the subject. In Leviticus, xvii. 2, it is thus written, "The life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls; *for it is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul.*" And in Hebrews, ix. 22, it is declared that—"without shedding of blood is no remission." Hence the blood of the covenant has flowed through every age, and has been the hope of the saints—the symbol of the promised seed, through all generations.

Neither will it be necessary to dwell on our second position, that none save the priest could present this atoning sacrifice. This is very plainly declared in Hebrews, v. 1. "For every high priest taken from among men, is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he

may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins." It is sufficiently proved too, by the ceremonies on the great day of atonement. On that day the priest appeared, in the most solemn manner, in the sanctuary before the Lord, on behalf of the people, nor, we suppose, will any one doubt that, had any other person offered to do this, he would have paid for his temerity with his life. No man might take "this honour to himself, but he that was called of God, as was Aaron." And the guilt of assuming this office, without such a call, was fearfully exemplified in the awful fate of Korah and his company, whose censors, after they had gone down alive into the pit were beaten into plates for a covering to the altar, "to be a memorial to the children of Israel that no stranger, who is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense, and by parity of reasoning, to offer sacrifice—before the Lord; that he be not as Korah, and as his company." The same thing is exemplified in the case of Saul, who, under trying enough circumstances, said, "I forced myself, and offered a burnt-offering," by which Samuel declared that he had completed the guilt which lost him the kingdom. The case of Uzziah affords distinct proof of the same thing. But it is unnecessary to multiply proofs on a subject so plain; for the very institution of

the priesthood is a sufficient proof of our position, since, if any man might offer expiatory sacrifices, that institution was useless.

These hints may serve for the present on a point, which, we trust, few of our readers are disposed to call in question, that where there is atonement there is sacrifice, and where there is sacrifice there is a priest to offer it. If, then, Christ made atonement for sin, he made that atonement by sacrifice; and if he offered a sacrifice then was he a priest, not a priest elect, to be anointed to his office at some future period, but a priest already possessed of all the dignity and of all the prerogatives of the priesthood at the moment when the sacrifice was offered.

We have already stated, that the Priest who offered an atoning sacrifice, must of necessity, be perfectly holy, ceremonially so under the law, since really so, none could possibly be. It is to be observed also, that the victim offered was likewise required to be perfect in its kind, without blemish or spot, else it could not be accepted. "Cursed be the deceiver, that hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth to the Lord a corrupt thing; for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen."

Both as the victim offered, then, and as the

Priest who offered it, it was necessary that Christ should possess all the perfection of holiness,— a holiness not resulting from a successful resistance of the motions of sin in the flesh, but a holiness resulting from the total absence of any such motions. For an inclination to sin, however successfully resisted, and however completely repressed from going forth into actual transgression, is itself criminal, and totally incompatible with the holiness of the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." If such inclination was in Christ, then was he under the same necessity as the Levitical high-priest, to prepare himself for appearing before the Lord, by offering first a sacrifice for his own sins. The holiness of him, therefore, who, "through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God," was not a holiness that resulted from a successful repression of the sinful inclinations of the flesh, or from a successful overcoming of the renitency of the human will against the Divine will; but from the total absence of any such inclinations, or such renitency in the MAN anointed in the moment of conception, with all the plenitude of the Holy Ghost. Had he been, in any manner, or to any degree, involved in the guilt of men, he could not have substituted himself in the room of guilty men, but must have died for his own guilt.

Christ then was really and truly a Priest,—an unfallen and sinless Priest. He had a life which was strictly his own, which he could, by no law, be required either to assume, or to lay down; a life which, in this respect, differed essentially from the life of every created being; for no created being assumes life, but receives it at the will of God, without the possibility of giving his own previous consent to its reception, and without the possibility of having or of acquiring any right to dispose of that life as he pleases. Christ thus having a human life differing from the life of every created being, had power to lay it down at his own pleasure, and in any manner that he might think proper. He did lay it down, and his death was really and truly an atonement. It was the payment of our debt, the ransom of our redemption, the endurance of our penalty, the price by which we were purchased, the removal of the wrath of God from us, by its transference to our substitute. This atonement was demanded by all the attributes of the Divine character, all of which are gloriously illustrated by it. It was demanded by the interests of all the rational family of God, which would have been involved in dismay and ruin, had sin been pardoned without that proof of its unalterable hatefulness in the sight of God, which the atonement alone could furnish.

By the atonement, Christ has laid a ground for an intercession which must always be effectual, so that the prayer of faith offered unto God through him, can never fail to be heard. "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

The most important duty, and that which we most clearly and obviously owe to our great High Priest, is to renounce every self-righteous thought, and every self-dependent feeling, and account the pardon of our sins, and eternal life as solely the free gift of God through him. That every deed of righteousness that we do, is not one of the causes, but one of the effects of our justification, is a truth of the very utmost importance; and a truth which may perhaps be most satisfactorily proved by considering some of the most common objections that are opposed to it.

It is objected to the doctrine that we are justified solely by the atonement made by Christ, that no necessary connection can be discovered between the pardon of a guilty person, and the death of an innocent one; nor can any one explain how the latter can be the cause of the former. To this it may be answered—and the answer is a complete counterpoise to the ob-

jection,—that there is just as little connection, that we can see, between pardon and repentance, or between pardon and any thing else that may be considered as its cause, as between pardon and atonement. Both the objection and the answer are particular instances of a universal truth, which is, that no necessary connection is discoverable by us between any two events, which, nevertheless, we are accustomed to consider as cause and effect. God has established a connection between the atonement of Christ, and the pardon of the believer; and what, besides the *fiat* of the Almighty, is requisite to establish a connection between any two things? or what else has made any one thing in the universe to be the cause of any other thing? If, therefore, we could see no reason why the pardon of sin is communicated through the expiatory sacrifice of Jesus Christ,—no necessity whatever for atonement, yet, when the fact is revealed to us by God, that we can be pardoned only through a crucified Redeemer, it would become us, as offending creatures, depending altogether on the mercy of God, to receive the annunciation with all humility and gratitude. But when God has graciously permitted us to see, in part at least, the absolute necessity of atonement, and some of the important moral purposes answered by it, it is worse than fool-

ish to find fault with this method of communicating pardon.

When it is said that God is willing to pardon us upon our repentance, without any atonement, it is taken for granted that we can repent when we please. For if repentance be something entirely out of our power, then it can afford us no comfort to tell us, even if it were true, that repentance will purchase our pardon. And I know not that even the most determined rationalism has ever promulgated a tenet more clearly absurd, or more decidedly opposed to all experience, than the tenet that a man can repent of himself, without being led and enabled to do so by the Holy Spirit. Many a sinner is, no doubt, soothing himself to peace by the promise of a future repentance. But he neither knows as yet what repentance is, nor his own need of it, else he would build himself up in no such foolish delusion. For what does the sinner do, when he promises himself a future repentance? He just says, To-day, nothing shall induce me to abstain from indulging every appetite and every desire; nothing shall lead me to think of God at all, or to think of him without dread and aversion; nothing can make me delight to contemplate his perfections, or find any pleasure in drawing near to him; to-morrow, I will sit down and mourn, in the ut-

most anguish of spirit, those indulgences from which nothing shall induce me to-day to abstain, and wish a thousand times that I had never yielded to them; nothing shall give me such delight as the contemplation of those glorious perfections which, to-day, I hate to think of; and I shall account nothing such a privilege as to draw near to that throne of grace, before which nothing shall induce me, to-day, to bend the knee. This is exactly what the sinner says, when he promises himself a future repentance. He promises that to-morrow he will hate with the most cordial detestation, that to which, to-day, he clings with the most ardent affection. He who says, To-day I am bowed down with all the weight of three score years and ten, but to-morrow I am resolved that I shall flourish in all the vigour of unbroken youth, forms a resolution quite as rational, and quite as much within his power to accomplish, as he who says, to-morrow I will repent. Repentance and renovation are not sacrifices which we give to God, as the price of our justification; but gifts which God bestows upon us, and which God only can bestow, in consequence of our having been freely justified, through the atonement of our Priest.

But the grand objection to the doctrine of atonement is, that it is hostile to the interests

of morality. It is said, that to tell a man that he is justified, not by his obedience to the law of God, but solely by the merits of our great High Priest, is to cut the very sinews of exertion; to place a pillow beneath the head of the sluggard; to spread a couch for the repose of indolence; to take away the most powerful motives to diligence in doing good, and to steadfastness in resisting temptation. It is very natural, say such objectors, for a man to reason thus. As my justification depends not at all on my own holiness, therefore it is unnecessary for me to put myself to the pain and trouble of cultivating holiness. I need take no care, since I have a sufficient surety to answer for all my failures. That some men should be found who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, is what any one acquainted with human nature would be prepared to expect. But the Gospel is not responsible for the errors of those who pervert it to their own destruction. No truth is more certain, than that the promotion of holiness is the great end of all that Christ has done and suffered for us,—that to raise man from his state of moral weakness and degradation, and to lead him to the perfection of his moral nature, is the grand purpose, as far as we are concerned, for which the great plan of our redemption was devised,

and carried into execution. But the atonement is not only not hostile to this purpose, but furnishes the only means by which it can be accomplished. It will be granted, that religion consists in regarding our Maker with all those feelings which his perfections are calculated to inspire; or, as the sacred writers emphatically call it, having the "heart right with God." To believe in the being of God is the first article in religion; and to know his nature is the first step toward religious perfection. Consequently, whatever tends most effectually to instruct us as to the character of God, and most deeply to impress upon our hearts a sense of his glorious perfections, must also most effectually tend to produce holiness. Now, which of the two has the clearer and more impressive view of the divine character—he who believes in the atonement, or he who considers it unnecessary? In the death of Christ, viewed as a sacrifice for sin, the one sees the holiness of God, and the "exceeding sinfulness of sin" so awfully displayed, that he can conceive of nothing else which could display them so strongly or convince him of them so deeply—that, in his view, not even the destruction of the whole human race could, in so awful and impressive a manner, manifest the holiness of God, and the utter and inconceivable hatefulness of sin,

as the humiliation and death of the Son of God. In the death of Christ, the other sees no such sacrifice, nor any manifestation whatever of the holiness of God, or of the evil of sin; and he would tell us that the deluge, the destruction of Sodom, or the final perdition of any one human being, is, beyond all comparison, a more awful proof of the hatefulness of sin, than the death of Christ. Is it possible, then, that the latter can have as deep and impressive a view of the holiness of God, as the former; or have his heart so effectually aroused to a dread of sin, and a sense of its malignity?

Again: with regard to love to God, that important principle of morality, what can be so well calculated to awaken it, as a belief in the doctrine of atonement? "We love him, because he first loved us;" and it is in the atonement that we witness the exhibition of a love ineffable and inconceivable. He who, awakened to a sense of his guilt, has felt himself ready to sink under its insupportable weight, and has found safety and peace in the blood of the "Lamb that was slain," finds himself totally unable to express his sense of the mercy of God, in providing such a ransom for his offending creatures. It is in the very God against whom he has rebelled, that he finds his help; and a life devoted to his service is

the necessary consequence of that supreme gratitude and affection which have been implanted in his heart. Who will love God most? He who sees him providing a way by which pardon may be granted, while we are placed in a situation in which pardon was so difficult, that without the shedding of blood there could be no remission?—or he who only considers him as pardoning while there was no obstacle whatever to the granting of that pardon?

And who will regard the law of God with the greatest respect,—he who considers its claims as so limited, that he is fully able to satisfy them, or he who considers it as so pure and so extensive, that he only looks forward to conformity to it, as the completion of his salvation and the perfection of his nature? He who considers every deed of righteousness which he performs, as so much of the labour accomplished which is to purchase heaven for him, and for which he looks on God as his debtor; or he who considers it as a new step gained in his progress to perfection, and a new ground of gratitude to God? In every view which can be taken of the subject, the law appears to be "made void," not by the man who sets it aside as the ground of justification, because he has so high an idea of its sanctity, that he considers justification, and all the bless-

ings connected with it, as so many means adopted to produce conformity to the law; but by him who considers it only as a means for attaining a further end; and a means, too, which we are perfectly capable of employing. The end of the one is to be justified, and conformity to the law the means by which it is to be accomplished. The end of the other is to be renewed after the image of his Maker, in righteousness and true holiness; and justification is only one of the means by which that end is to be attained. The one obeys that he *may be* justified; the other obeys because he *has been* justified. Much has been forgiven him; therefore he loveth much. Upon what possible ground, then, can he who denies the atonement, triumph over him who adopts it? or talk of his regard for the interests of morality, after he has degraded holiness from its lofty situation as the very end of our being, the end for which we were created and redeemed, into the rank of a means for the attainment of some further and more important object? Or how can he pretend that he is exalting the dignity of human nature, who contends for the debasing doctrine, that if the dread of punishment be removed, there is no longer any sufficient motive to the cultivation of holiness?

The first and most sacred duty which we

owe to Christ as our Priest, is, to consider the pardon of our sins as resulting solely from his work as our Priest,—as freely granted antecedently to any holiness that we do or can possess, and consequently as being in no sense, and to no degree, the effect of that holiness. And this belief, so far from being hostile to the interests of morality, affords the only ground upon which the principles of morality can be securely built; as it makes holiness not the means to some further attainment, but the ultimate attainment, the final perfection of man; and as it not only furnishes the only effectual means for the successful cultivation of holiness, but sets before us motives for its cultivation of a more impressive urgency, than any thing else that we can conceive possibly could do.

Another duty which we owe to our Priest is to consider him as the ONLY Priest, through whom we can have access to God, or receive any blessing from him. Christ hath, "by one offering, perfected for ever them that are sanctified," and if there can be no more offering for sin, then there can be no other priest: and if the death of Christ was perfectly sufficient for our justification, then nothing needs to be added to it. In this respect the Church of Rome is grievously guilty. But upon this subject, where it would be easier to write a volume

than a page, I am not called to enter. Without looking to the errors of others, I would urge upon my reader seriously to consider, whether an error of the same kind do not exist in his own heart. Self-righteousness is not so much a speculative error embraced by a particular church, as a practical error derived from the depravity of the heart, whatever may be the creed believed. There is always a tendency to substitute something in ourselves, in part at least, as the ground of that grace which can be derived from our great High Priest alone, a tendency which manifests itself in a great variety of ways, and which must be sedulously guarded against as dishonouring to Christ.

Another duty which we owe to our great High Priest, is to live up to our privileges; and that both as it regards our advancement in the spiritual life, and our enjoyment of spiritual pleasure. The Christian life is essentially a progressive thing. Nothing can be a greater mistake than the opinion which seems to be entertained by many, that when a man has once reason to think himself a Christian, no farther improvement in his character can be expected, or needs to be sought after; that there can be no reason why he should possess a stronger faith, or more lively hope, or a larger measure, or a more active exercise, of all Christian graces,

when he is forty years of age, than when he was thirty. He who entertains such a notion has abundant reason to doubt whether he knows any thing about the Christian life. Christ "died that he might redeem us from all our iniquities," and he entered into heaven, there to appear before God in order to procure for us, and bestow upon us, all the grace and all the power necessary to enable us to make our path "as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." And how can we pretend to be his disciples at all, or with what feelings can we hope to meet him, if we can permit days, and months, and years, to pass away, without even calling upon him at all, or calling upon him only in a formal and feeble manner, for the exercise of his sacerdotal office on our behalf; and are living as if, so far as we are concerned, it were a matter of no consequence whether Christ be or be not a Priest,—whether he do, or do not possess the power of procuring for us every thing necessary to enable us to go on from grace to grace, and from strength to strength, till we appear perfect before God in Zion. Salvation is looked upon as something to be obtained and enjoyed in a future state, and to be seriously sought for, only when we can engage in worldly concerns no longer; not as something which

it is the first concern of man to obtain, and the possession of which alone is able to carry us comfortably through all the duties and trials of life. This is exactly as if the rebel should say, that when actually brought to the scaffold, it would then be time enough to think of the effectual mediator offered to him; or as if the sick man should say that he would enjoy his disease as long as possible, and then when death seemed inevitable, would apply to the physician who could, and who alone could certainly heal him.

. The Christian life ought to be, because Christ has amply provided the means by which it may be made, a life of alacrity and joy. It is not more the privilege than the duty of the Christian, to "rejoice always." He can look upon that rich field of privilege and of promise placed before him in the Bible, and can say that it is all his own. And where is the want that the blessed fruits of that field cannot supply, the distress which they cannot relieve, the wound that they cannot heal, the fear that they cannot quell, or the sorrow for which they do not furnish abundant consolation. Friend of Jesus, why weepest thou? If you have "an Advocate with the Father," through whom your sins are all forgiven, and you are made a child of God; and the Holy Ghost is given you as

your sanctifier and comforter; and you are assured of having Almighty power for your support, and unerring wisdom for your guide, and heaven for your eternal home, what can overbalance or suppress the joy which naturally results from such privileges as these? Trials we may, we must meet with; but can these depress us, when we know that "our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory?" If tried by bodily pain, we should just feel more keenly the happiness of the hope which anticipates the time when we shall have "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Worldly losses will not overwhelm us, if we know that we are undoubted heirs of an "inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." Friends may change; but we will be comforted by the assurance that in Christ we have a "brother born for adversity," nay, "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." There rolls between us and our Father's house, the deep and restless tide of this world's corruption, through which we must of necessity pass, and the deeper and more dangerous tide of the corruptions of our hearts, and we are surrounded by enemies on every side; and when we feel our own weakness, we may be

ready to fear lest we should one day fall by the hand of some of them. But every distressing fear is removed when we recollect that we "shall not be tempted beyond what we are able to bear," and that, in point of fact, there is no limit to our power, for we "can do all things through Christ strengthening us," and that the life that is in us is the life of Christ, a life which no power can extinguish in any one of Christ's members, any more than it can extinguish it in our glorious Head.

In every thing, therefore, does it become the Christian to give thanks,—even for those trials which call into exercise, and thus strengthen his graces; for though "no chastening for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby." The Christian can therefore "glory in tribulation," well knowing that when he comes to the end of his course, and looks back, on all his blessings, and on all his trials, when he sings of mercy, he will see reason to sing of judgment too. But when we drag on heavily, as if there were disheartening difficulties to be met, and heavy penalties to be endured, at every step, we bring up an evil report upon the good land; and make the world believe that we serve a harsh master, who demands

much while he gives little; and confirm the too readily adopted notion, that religion is a dull and gloomy thing, the death of all pleasure, and the grave of all enjoyment. And if we go to the discharge of every duty, as if there were a "lion in the way," and go to meet trial and temptation with feelings like those with which Saul went from Endor to Gilboa, what but discomfiture can we expect, when we engage under the depressing influence of anticipated defeat? We are invited to come, and that even "with boldness, to the throne of grace." If indeed, we depended for obtaining the petitions that we make, upon our own merits, and might ask nothing but what we deserve, then it would be useless to go to a throne of grace, or to take the name of God into our lips at all; since we have deserved only wrath. But if our petitions be founded on the merits of Christ, then we can ask nothing that he has not deserved, and nothing that, if it be really good for us, he is not willing to bestow. In this case, to come to God with fear and hesitation, to limit our petitions to small matters, because we feel that we have no claim to ask larger, or to make our own merits in any degree, the measure of our acceptance, or to ask as if God would grudge what he bestows—in all this we are just dishonour-

ing our great High Priest, and living far beneath the privileges which he bestows upon us. To consider religion as being our business, but the world as the source from which we must draw our pleasures—to approach God in prayer as a duty which it is right, and proper, and profitable to perform, but without any feeling of its being a privilege which it is delightful to enjoy,—to come to him as a Judge whose good will it is our interest to conciliate, without being able to look upon him as a Father whose power, and riches, and kindness, it gives us pleasure to contemplate and celebrate, and whose approving smile, the light of whose countenance, is a greater treasure than corn and wine, and oil,—is to take a view of that communion to which God calleth us, and of the privileges which he has conferred upon us, that must greatly mar both our peace, and our progress in the Christian life. While therefore every thing approaching to presumption, or to that affected familiarity with God which some appear to mistake for filial confidence, is to be guarded against with the most sedulous care; with equal care ought we to guard against that distrust of our High Priest which makes us dread to exercise and to enjoy, with the most perfect confidence and freedom, the privileges which in Christ Jesus we possess.

CHRIST OUR KING.

I proceed now to the consideration of our Lord's regal offices; and here it will be seen that his death, and consequently his incarnation was essentially necessary to the due discharge of his functions as a King. From eternity he was Lord over all. He possessed, in common with the other persons of the Godhead, power to sustain and bless his true worshippers, and to involve his enemies in destruction. But, as Mediator, he was the Father's servant, and could obtain no kingdom which he did not first gain by victory,—could not be the Saviour of men till he had conquered men's foes, and could not be Lord of all things visible and invisible, for the purpose of effectually securing the salvation of his people, till he had first purchased this dignity, by a full and faithful discharge of the duties imposed upon him, and by him undertaken in the covenant entered into between him and the Father. A kingdom was given unto the Son by the Father,—a kingdom which he will continue to hold until the mystery of redemption be finished, when he shall again give up the kingdom, that God may be "all in all."

From the beginning, then, was Christ a king, and as a king did he come to exhibit himself in the world. When he was anointed with the

fulness of the Holy Ghost, he was anointed as a king, not less than as a prophet and priest. In proof of this, we would refer to the *forty-fifth* Psalm. There Christ's prophetic character is first referred to when it is said, "Grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever," and then follows a splendid description of his regal power and authority. In the *twenty-second* Psalm also, his prophetic and royal characters are so mingled as to render it impossible to suppose that the one of these could commence at one period, and the other at another. In the *hundred and tenth* Psalm, his regal character is, in the same way, combined with his priesthood, leading irresistibly to the conclusion that all these characters he adopted, that to all these offices was he anointed, at one and the same time. The prophet Daniel too has determined an appointed time "to anoint the most holy." But the prophet has taken no notice whatever of a variety of anointings at different times. But if Christ was, in reality, to be anointed at different times, and for different purposes, then the statement of the prophet is not only defective, but tends to mislead.

That Christ was a king at his coming into the world, is proved by the fact, that the first specific character under which he is presented

to us in the New Testament, is that of a king. "Now, when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, where is he that is born king of the Jews?" Now, when these men were led by the Holy Spirit from a far country to proclaim the birth of this king, and when they must have come to worship him, not merely as king of the Jews, a person in whom they could have no concern, but as that generally expected king, who, arising in Judea, was to obtain the dominion of the world, who was to be the salvation of God to all the ends of the earth,"—"a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the glory of Israel,"—a king the expectation of whose coming was so general, that the flatterers of Vespasian professed to find the fulfilment of the prophecy in him, upon what possible ground can it be rationally maintained that the person so distinctly announced as the long-promised king, was in reality at that time no king at all, nor to be made a king till after his death?

Again, when our Saviour entered into the temple, which the Jews were making a house of merchandise, and when, "having made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep and the oxen; and poured out the changer's money, and overthrew

the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise;" he was surely, in thus purging the temple, not only assuming to himself both a sacerdotal and royal prerogative, but was giving a most unequivocal manifestation of his royal authority. For who is this who not only utters so unpleasant a command, but who so imperiously compels an instantaneous obedience to it? Is this the carpenter's son, the despised Nazarene, the obscure peasant of the polluted land of Gallilee of the Gentiles? Assuredly, no. Had he appeared in the temple in no other character than this, and attempted such a purgation of it, he would at once have been stoned to death, or torn to pieces. It is clear that they who submitted thus to be driven from the temple, which they had converted into an exchange, who, without daring to resist, saw even their money poured out, beheld in him, who thus drove them away, the unequivocal manifestations of a majesty that was not to be opposed,—of a regal authority and power, that might not for a moment brook resistance. He was then claiming to himself the honour and the submission due to a king, and as assuredly and as fully possessed that character then, as he does now.

The prophet had distinctly declared that the

Messiah would come as a king, saying,—"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy king cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass." And this prediction was fulfilled to the very letter, when at the triumphant entrance of our Lord into Jerusalem, "the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice, and praise God with a loud voice, for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, Blessed be the king that cometh in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven, and glory in the highest."—And when the Pharisees were offended at this open declaration that he was Messiah the king, and desired him to rebuke his disciples, so far was he from complying with their request, and suppressing the voices that hailed him as the long-promised king, that "he answered and said unto them, I tell you that if these should hold their peace the stones would immediately cry out."

And was he who was thus announcing himself to Zion as her king, whom her eyes were almost failing with long looking for, as yet a king only in expectancy? Was he not acknowledged by Nathaniel, and hailed by the multitude, as "King of Israel?" And are we to suppose that it was without the Providence of God, and without the dictation of his Holy Spi-

rit, that Pilate wrote, and, though entreated by the offended Jews, refused to alter that inscription which officially, and more truly than Pilate knew, declared that he, who was suspended on the cross, was "King of the Jews?" Had there been any one of his offices in which he did not distinctly announce himself to the Jews, then, *so far*, had they been guiltless, as they could not be guilty of rejecting that which was never offered to them.

He came not only as King of the Jews, but he came that in man's nature he might overthrow man's foes, might spoil the spoiler, divest Satan of his long usurped dominion, enter into the strong man's house, bind him and take from him his goods, and cast out the prince of this world. During the whole course of his life he showed his superiority to the powers of darkness. The demons knew him to be the "Holy one of God," and shunned his presence, and fled his approach, and offered no resistance to his commands. The hour of their power was not yet come, and they could afflict him only through the instrumentality of wicked men. But that hour did come,—the hour when the soul of Jesus began to be "amazed and very heavy," words which fall far short indeed of expressing the energy of the original, as that and all other language must fall far short of expressing in an

adequate manner, all the fearfulness of that amazement and horror of mind which then seized him. The hour did come which made him cry out, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father save me from this hour; but for this came I unto this hour,—Father, glorify thy name." Now, what was it that made the prospect of this hour so terrible to Jesus? Was it the mere dread of death? The supposition is totally inconsistent with the whole of his conduct and character. Many of his disciples have endured the cross, and submitted to all the tortures that ingenuity could devise; and even women and children have suffered all these tortures, without a groan. And did Jesus look on the mere pain of dying with more than all the terror, and cling to a troubled life with more than all the weakness of mortal man? No. It was not dying that he dreaded, but the fearful conflict by which his death was to be preceded. The powers of darkness were all let loose upon him to assail him with their utmost force. A broken law came to demand of him the restitution of all its violated honour, and to inflict upon him the curse due to its violation. And was it only a part of its demand that it then insisted upon? Only a part of its penalty, that it then inflicted? We cannot think it. We cannot see how the law was honoured,

if only a part of the violations by which it had been insulted and trampled upon, were visited upon him, and only a part of its penalty endured. It was not merely a few of the iniquities of his people, "but the iniquities of us all," that he bore on the cross. And how did he bear them? Was it in mere outward show, while in reality he felt not their penal consequences? How he could be said to bear them then, and to restore that which he took not away, we understand not, and if when the sinner is first awakened to a sense of his guilt, or when the backslider begins to be filled with the fruit of his own ways,—when conscience is setting his sins in array before him, and the law is stamping all the bitterness of its curse upon every one of them, thus filling his heart with terrors that can find expression only in groanings unutterable, and more fearful by far than the terrors of death,—if the guilt of one individual can thus fill the heart of that individual with such anguish and such agony, who may venture to form any estimate of the agony endured by Christ when he made his soul an offering for sin,—when the deceit of Jacob, the adultery and murder of David, the denial of Peter, and the persecutions of Paul, when the sins of an apostate world were collected into one dark mass, and its whole burden laid upon him? The law, inexorable as the

stony tablets upon which it was engraved, was there, setting all the sins by which his guilty people had been polluted, in array before him, filling his soul with all their terrors, and exacting from him the penalty due to them all. And death was there,—armed with a power, and clothed with terrors, in which he never before or since assailed living being. It is sin that forms the sting of death, and invests him with all his powers. And if his assaults be terrible to every individual of us, on account of our own individual sins,—and if he be terrible to us often, even when we know that these sins are all forgiven, who may estimate the power and the terror with which he assailed our Lord, when armed with the power and invested with the terrors, not of the sins of an individual, but of those of a lost world? And he who had the power of death, even Satan, was there, with all his powers unfettered and unrestrained, to try what they might avail against the "second man," in the hour of sorest travail. And the prince of the powers of the air spread darkness over all the land, and made the earth to quake in the mightiness of his efforts. But these were only faint and feeble shadows of the darkness and commotion which were raised in the soul of the sufferer, in that hour of his dismal conflict, when his power to accomplish the original

promise was put to its last fearful trial; when he conquered in suffering, and bruised the serpent's head while his own heel was bruised.

Now had there been in any department of Christ's person, any thing to which the terms sinful, fallen, rebellious, could with the most distant approach to truth or justice be applied, we would ask if his escape from this hour of the power of darkness was a thing within the bounds of possibility? Had the law found in him the slightest ground to which it might attach the curse due to its violation, it would have held him fast in its adamantine chain, as a debtor on his own account, and never would he have been able to rescue himself, much less us, from its inexorable grasp. Had death and he who had the power of death, found the slightest ground in which the sting of death might be planted, then assuredly had death had forcible dominion over him, and the blackness of that darkness which was around him and within him, in the garden and on the cross, had been his portion for ever. But he endured their utmost rage, deeply tried, tried with a trial beyond aught that mortal man may ever comprehend, but unsubdued. He endured till the law had no farther claim, till the powers of darkness fled, their utmost power defeated and baffled, and with them passed away the dark-

ness from the land, and from the soul of the victorious and triumphant sufferer, and Satan saw that his long usurped dominion over the world was now utterly and hopelessly broken. He endured till he could say, "It is finished," till "having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it," namely in his cross He endured till all his confidence and trust in his Father had returned, to restore peace and holy joy to the soul from which they had for a time withdrawn, and then, having openly shown that the princes of this world had nothing in him, he freely and voluntarily gave a life which was still his own for the life of a lost world. Fearful was the conflict that he sustained during the hour of the "power of darkness," but happy and glorious was the result, and splendid was the victory in which his sufferings terminated, and most royally triumphant was his death.

From these remarks the reader will perceive that I maintain, not only that Christ's death was as necessary to the due discharge of his royal office, as it was to the due discharge of his prophetic and sacerdotal offices; but that I further maintain, that his death, at the very last moment of his mortal existence, was perfectly voluntary,—that at that moment, whether he would or would not die, was a thing as com-

pletely in his power to determine, as, previous to his Incarnation, it was within his power to determine whether he would or would not be made flesh. The simple statement which we have made of the conflict that he had to endure on the cross, and of the victorious manner in which he came out of that conflict, might perhaps be considered a sufficient proof of this. But as it is a matter of the highest importance, I shall enter a little further into it.

In support of the position that Christ was not subject to death, but that he laid down his life of his own accord, I quote his own express declaration to that purpose: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." Nothing, it appears to me, can be simpler, or clearer, or more unambiguous, than this declaration of our Lord, that his life was at his own disposal. This he spoke of his human life, for it would be worse than absurd to suppose that, before he had a human life, he could have used any such language. It is very clear from this, that the life which he had taken, was a mortal life, else he could not have laid it down at all. And it is

equally clear, that having taken a mortal life, he could not say that he had power to lay it down, if, in point of fact, he had no power to retain it, but was compelled to forego it. He could not say that he had power to lay it down, and to take it again, in order to show that he was Lord both of life and of death, if he died because he had come into the region of death, and was no more able to avoid dying than any of those to whom he spoke. If he was not God, and had not assumed human life at his own pleasure, then he could have used no such language; for no created being can, by any possibility, possess the power here claimed by Jesus. But if he was God, and if the human life which he had assumed was as truly his own life as his Divinity was his own, then he unquestionably did possess a sovereign right to dispose of that life as he pleased. And if he had not that power over his own life, which no created being can have, then it was not possible to present that life a voluntary offering for the world. It was not his to give. In that case he did no more than Codrus, Curtius, and a hundred more have done. Being bound to die at any rate, he was generous enough to anticipate the date of his death, in order to accomplish an important purpose, and acquire a deathless fame. Though what important pur-

pose could be accomplished by his death, if he had placed himself in a situation where death was unavoidable, it is not easy to see.

Should the possibility of a doubt yet remain, whether the text under consideration just means what it so very plainly states,—should it be thought possible, without impiety, to understand our Lord to mean any thing else than just that at the moment when he was speaking, he had absolute power over the life which his hearers saw him possess, to lay it down and to take it up at his pleasure, let us consider the purpose for which he made the declaration. His object was to convince his auditors that he was the Life, and that therefore all who committed themselves to him would be perfectly safe, for none could pluck them out of his hand. And the proof, that in him their life was safe, was, that he himself had a life which no man could take from him,—a life over which death had no power. Now this is just the ground on which our confidence in him rests, that "as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given the Son to have life in himself." But if, when the hour of trial come, it was found that he could not resist the power of death in himself, nor realize the declaration that he made, that no man could take his life from him,—then how can we possibly rely

upon him, that he can repel the power of death from us, or fulfil the promise that he has made to us, that none shall ever be able to pluck us out of his hand? He who could not save himself from the grasp of the King of terrors, can afford us little confidence in his power to save us. If, then, to maintain that Christ was a fallen, sinful man, and as incapable of resisting death as we are,—if to maintain that when the hour of trial came, he conquered not death, but death conquered him, if this be not directly to falsify his own express declaration and to overthrow the very pillars of the Christian's hope, I know not what can be considered as doing so.

It is of no avail to tell us that, at his resurrection, this gift of having life in himself,—this quickening power was restored. For how do we know that he holds that gift now, by a firmer tenure than that by which he held it before? When he declared to the Jews, that the Father had given him power to have life in himself, and further assured them that he had perfect power over that life, he had all the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him, to enable him to resist any violence by which he might be assailed. Can he have more than all the fulness of the Godhead to guard it now? Yet we are told that a stronger than he came,

and by violence took away the gift, which the Father had given him for the life of the world. After the restoration of that gift, are we not left to dread, that, by similar violence, it may again be taken away, since assuredly it can be secured by no stronger power now than it was at first?

Another text, which very clearly evinces our Lord's victory over death, is in Hebrews, v. 7. "Who, in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard, in that he feared." To him, as man, death was naturally terrible; and, coming to him armed with terrors incalculably greater than he ever assaulted any other man with, awakened prayers and supplications of the most earnest and pathetic description. One of them we have recorded in Psalm xxii, which he repeated on the cross: "Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion's mouth, for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns." Such were his prayers in the hour of his fearful conflict with the powers of darkness. And how was he heard? Was it by being given up, a bound captive, into the power of death, and of him who had the power of death, that

is, the devil? No; but he was heard by being sustained against all their violence, till he triumphed over them on the cross, and death, and he that had the power of death, fled away baffled, and found that they had met with one man, against whom their utmost efforts could avail nothing. And then he voluntarily laid down a life which was still his own to give or to retain; and he entered into the domain of death, not as a captive, but as a conqueror, to fulfil the prediction, "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction." Could he accomplish this prediction by being overcome by death on the cross? No; had death, and he who had the power of death, for one moment overmastered him, then was every hope of a lost world extinguished, and that for ever.

Again, if the Prince of this world conquered Christ upon the cross, and violently took away his life, then it is clear that he was not then, "King of kings, and Lord of lords;" he had met with his superior; he was not even a king at all, but a fallen, sinful man. But how then could he save men from the beginning of the world? And if the cross was a scene of his defeat, and the monument of his weakness, how can it also be the foundation of our hopes, and the ground of our glorying? Or with what truth

could the Apostle say that he triumphed over principalities and powers on the cross, if there they, in reality, triumphed over him?

Finally I appeal, as a proof of the regal character of our Lord's death, to the circumstances that attended it, all of which strongly show that at the moment when it took place it was perfectly voluntary. When the band of men and officers went out to take him, he showed how easily he could have escaped out of their hands, for "as soon as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backwards and fell to the ground," overwhelmed, doubtless by some exhibition of his divine power. And when his disciples would have defended him, he told them that, if he wanted defence, he could have, not twelve unarmed apostles, but twelve legions of angels for that purpose. "But then, how shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be." Even after he was fastened to the cross, he showed that he was still the life, in the promise made to the penitent thief. What could possibly induce that malefactor to apply in such circumstances to a fellow sufferer, as incapable, according to some, of resisting the death to which both had been doomed, as himself? It is unquestionable that he had observed in Christ something more than mortal, when he addressed to him the prayer, "Lord,

remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." And why has the Holy Ghost recorded the fact, but to show, that he who, in such a situation, could make the magnificent promise, "Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise," was not himself the weak victim of death? And are we to say that he who thus almost with his dying breath, conferred eternal life, was unable to save his own life from the assault of death? And when he had endured all that his foes, whether men or devils, could inflict: when the darkness passed away, and the victory was won; then did he cry out, not with the feeble breathings of a man whose agonies had worn him down to the very lowest stage of existence, and of whom death had all but taken possession, but with the shout of a conqueror, whose life after all the assaults of death, after innumerable deaths had been inflicted upon him, was yet as whole within him as it had ever been, thus plainly intimating, that, even at that moment, instead of bowing his head and giving up the ghost, he could have stepped down from the cross. "But then how should the scriptures be fulfilled?" "When the Centurion saw that he *so* cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God." And deeply is it to be regretted that Christian di-

vines should adopt systems of theology* which compel them to deny a fact so clearly evinced to the Centurion by the evidence of his own senses, as to draw from him this confession,—a confession which the Holy Ghost has thought good to record for our conviction, that this MAN freely gave up, for the redemption of a lost world, a life which neither earth nor hell could wring from him, and over which death had no power.

It was essentially necessary that he who was to deliver others from their sins, should himself be perfectly free from any thing to which such terms could have the remotest application. And it was necessary that we should have the clearest and most decisive evidence of this; for upon the certainty that Christ was not fallen or sinful, depends the reality of the atonement, and the certainty of all our hopes. And never was any thing so severely tried, and never was testimony so decisive as that which proves the total sinlessness of the man Christ Jesus The traitor who betrayed him pronounced him innocent. His accusers he could boldly challenge to convince him of sin.

* This refers to the doctrine freely broached and advocated at the time the above was first written, that the flesh of Christ was sinful or at least peccable, and that Christ 'did no sin' only because 'the will of the spirit *enforced* the flesh to do it *unwilling* service.

The sentence of the judge who doomed him to the cross was. "I find no fault in him." Much guilt however might have been in him, which no mortal eye could detect; and in a matter in which we are so deeply and vitally concerned, much stronger evidence than that of the Jews and of Pilate was necessary; and much stronger evidence is given. The justice of God assailed him, armed with all the demands of a violated law, saying, "pay me that thou owest." The debt was paid, the penalty was endured, every demand was satisfied, and divine justice retired, saying, "I find no fault in him; I have scourged him with every strife due as the penalty of the law; let him go! The powers of darkness were let loose upon him, to try if their malice could find aught in him with which they might claim alliance, or on which they might ground the slightest charge against him; and after efforts, the power of which we can little apprehend, they fled baffled away, howling out in anguish their own hopeless doom, while forced to say, 'We find no fault in him; we have scourged him with worse than scorpion's stings and have been compelled to let him go.' Thus heaven, and earth, and hell unite in proclaiming to us the entire and perfect sinlessness of God's holy child Jesus, and pouring on our hearts the

conviction, that in him was no fault,—nothing which the inexorable justice of heaven could condemn, and nothing on which the unmitigated malice of hell could lay hold.

When the Word became flesh, he was not less the Word and the power of God,—not less the light and life of men,—not less the ruler and Lord of all, than he was before the Incarnation. He did not cease to be God when he became man. When he bore hunger and thirst, he was nevertheless showing, by changing water into wine, and by feeding thousands with a few loaves, that he it was who was indeed supplying the wants of every living thing; and that he endured hunger and thirst from no defect of power. When he had not where to lay his head, he was not the less "God over all, blessed forever." When, wearied, he rested on Jacob's well, the pillars of heaven, and the foundations of the earth rested securely on his sustaining power. And never did he give so splendid a proof that he was indeed *the Life*, as when he died. For the mystery and the marvel which angels desired to look into was, how he, by any possibility, could die. But they knew not all the extent of his power, they knew not that he had the keys of hell and of death, and that, rebelling as they were against heaven, they were still

completely subject to him, till they saw him tread the region of mortality, and enter at his own pleasure, unsubdued, as a conqueror, into their dreary domain. Then indeed, when he died, did they know, and for the first time know, in all the extent of its meaning, that he was *the Life.*

Christ then was King when he was on the earth,—a King in the lowest state of his deep humiliation; no less than now when he is exalted to the right hand of the Father; and in his very humiliation giving the most splendid and decisive proof of his omnipotent power. Before proceeding farther, it will be proper to notice some of the *duties* which we owe to him as our King.

The first of these, which I shall notice is, *to obey his laws.* To neglect this is to deny that he is King. "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" It is not to be doubted that many profess to rely on him as their propitiation, who pay no great regard to his laws; and think themselves perfectly safe, while living in the habitual neglect of some of his commands; nay, who are less careful to avoid sin just on account of the sufficiency of him on whom they profess to rely for the pardon of sin. But we may rest assured that if Christ be not a king whom we

obey, neither is he a priest who will save us. To hope that we can be saved without obedience, is not only to hope against hope, but against possibility; for surely it is not possible to be saved from sin while yet we are living in sin. Nor is our obedience to be limited by our convenience, our pleasure, nor our present interest, nor by the sufferings to which we may be called in its discharge. That is no obedience which extends only as far as we find it convenient. It was not such obedience that was yielded by Christ for our sakes, when he submitted to "learn obedience by the things which he suffered." Nor was it such obedience that he required of us, when he said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."

But we are required, not only to obey the laws of Christ, but to approve them,—to love them. "Bodily service profiteth nothing;" and our external compliance with a law which we hate in our hearts, is by our King considered as no obedience at all. The reason of this is sufficiently obvious. Our obedience is required that it may do good, not to God, who needs not our services, but to ourselves; that it may establish in us such habits as will fit us for the occupations and enjoyments of a higher state of existence. But if it proceed from any

improper principle, then its operation will be in direct opposition to this end, and consequently must meet the disapprobation of him "the end of whose commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." Every action strengthens the principle from which it proceeds; and being often repeated, renders the exercise of that principle necessary to our happiness. And when our love to God and man has been so "rooted and grounded" in us by a long course of holiness, that the exercise of it constitutes all our felicity, we are then fitted for the kingdom of heaven. Whereas the most perfect obedience, were it possible for such obedience to proceed from any other principle, would not in the slightest degree promote our moral improvement, nor our meetness for the society of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect.

Another duty which we owe to our King is *to depend upon his power*. If such an obedience as has been described be essentially requisite, it may be said, "Who then can be saved?" Had outward obedience only been necessary, even that is difficult. But who can change the whole current of his thoughts, affections, and desires,—can bring himself to hate and despise what he loves with all his

heart,—and to love and delight in all that he is most averse to? Can we make ourselves new creatures? No. We could as easily have created ourselves at first. But this will by no means form any apology for disobedience. For as the wisdom of our Prophet removes our ignorance, and the sacrifice of our Priest removes our condemnation, so that we are without excuse if we be either ignorant or in a state of alienation from God; in the same manner, the power of our King removes our moral weakness, and endues us with strength to triumph over the foes whom he has conquered, so that we are inexcusable if we remain the servants of sin. And as the renovation of the heart is a gradual thing, the grace that enables us to do it, must be sought from him daily. The soul needs its daily bread not less than the body.

Another duty which we owe to our King is, *to confide in his goodness*. It is for the purpose of delivering us out of the hand of all our enemies, and of promoting our welfare, that the Mediator is exalted to the throne of the universe, and appointed the sole disposer of every event in which we are concerned. We cannot for a moment doubt that he is abundantly able to give us every thing necessary for our happiness, and nothing can be more offensive

than to distrust his willingness to do so. He has given us the proofs of his love to little purpose, if we "faint when we are rebuked of him," and, when he tries us, presently conclude that he has forsaken us. This is a sin for which Israel was often reproved. "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God?" And surely, if we distrust our King, who assumed our nature, and submitted to our infirmities, that we might be more certainly assured of his sympathy, we can have less excuse than Israel had. If, therefore, we be visited with severe trials, let us not hastily say with Jacob, "All these things are against me," for, if our distrust do not lead us to take improper means to escape from them, we shall find that all these things are, in reality, working together for our good.

Another duty which we owe to our King is, *to preserve the peace of his kingdom.* The subjects of Christ's kingdom are commanded to love one another, and that even as Christ has loved them. Had this law been always acted upon, it is not easy to estimate the happiness of the effect that would have been produced. And the miserable effects that proceed from the dissensions among Christ's sub-

jects, and the weakness that has been introduced into his kingdom, by its being divided into so many different parties, need not be pointed out. Christ's kingdom has thus been rent, and its peace destroyed by the pride of men, who, having exalted their own opinion, upon some indifferent matter, into an article of fundamental importance, have renounced the communion of all who refuse to adopt the same notion. And whenever communion among Christians is broken off, a heavy weight of guilt attaches to that party which causes the schism. In order to avoid this guilt, every disciple of Jesus ought to be very cautious in refusing to hold communion with a fellow-subject, lest, when both parties stand before their King, this refusal be decided to have proceeded from no sufficient cause. Even the errors of Christians afford no just ground of separating from their communion, excepting in one of these two cases,—either when they err fundamentally, and by so doing, cease to be Christians; in which case their communion is in reality no communion, and, in renouncing it, we make no schism;—or when, supposing their errors to be of a less important nature, they require us distinctly and formally to profess our approbation of those errors, against our own convictions; in

which case we cannot hold communion with them, without being hypocrites, and are bound to separate from them; but the guilt of the schism rests with them. But to separate from the communion of men whom we believe to be true Christians, merely because, on some points of inferior moment, they maintain opinions different from our own,—while they do not require us to adopt or profess these opinions,—is a degree of presumption and arrogance which it is hard to reconcile with the spirit of genuine Christianity. Surely he has much need to inquire what he can offer to his Judge as an apology for his conduct, who has burst asunder the Redeemer's perfect bond of charity, and cast away that cord of love, by which the great Head of the church has united all the different members of his mystical body in the closest intimacy; who has, by his conduct, declared, that unless he himself be the head, he will be no part of the body; and who, refusing to acknowledge the disciples of Christ as his fellow-subjects, has renounced their communion, unless they would renounce every opinion which he does not approve, and adopt, on his authority, terms of communion which Christ never appointed.

Another duty which we owe to our King, is, *to extend his kingdom.* That this is our duty

hardly needs to be proved. We are commanded to exhibit in our conduct the excellence of the principles of Christianity, in such a manner as to allure others to cultivate them,—to make "our light so to shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father who is in heaven." We are soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ, and as good soldiers, should do every thing in our power to promote the designs of our leader. To rescue an immortal being from the dominion of sin, and make him a subject of the King of kings, is a nobler victory than any that the historian has recorded, or the poet sung. If ever enthusiasm be amiable or useful, then surely it is so when it regards the noblest object that ever awakened the desires or called forth the exertions of any human being; and the Christian may be permitted to indulge no ordinary degree of ardour in the prosecution of a design, for the accomplishment of which the Son of God did not hesitate to die. If, then, we regard either the authority or example of our King, if we would wish, when our days are at an end, to say that they have not been spent in vain, and that we have not been useless members of his kingdom, nor careless of its prosperity,—if we wish to associate at last with the glorious men who have instructed the

church by their wisdom, adorned it by their holiness, and cemented its foundation with their blood, then let us exert ourselves, by example, by instruction, by every means in our power, to promote the prosperity, and extend the limits of that kingdom into which we ourselves have by the grace of God been brought. For "they that be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many unto righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever."

We have thus traced our Saviour in the discharge of all his offices of Prophet, Priest, and King. For the discharge of all of them his death, and consequently his incarnation, was essentially necessary. He discharged the the duties resulting from these offices from the beginning. He discharged them all during his sojourn on the earth, and we have seen that in his death he gave the most complete exhibition of each of his offices. Christ is not and never was divided. When speaking of his different offices, we ascribe, and properly ascribe, one action or characteristic, to one office more peculiarly than to another; yet ought we never to forget that, in his one person, the three offices were inseparably combined, and, throughout his life, were manifested together. For what is it that gives to his every prophe-

tic act, by which he manifests the Father, so high a claim upon our reverential regard? Is it not this, that his every prophetic act combines with it all the sacredness of his sacerdotal character, and all the authority of his regal power; so that, if we refuse to be taught by him, we cut ourselves off from all participation in his sacerdotal grace, and expose ourselves to be crushed beneath the weight of that iron rod by which he will dash his enemies to pieces? Hence it is said that "the people were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught them *as one having authority*." And when he performs any sacerdotal act, as when he said to the sick of the palsy, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," is it not also a prophetic act, manifesting the grace and the power of the Godhead? and is it not an efficacious act, simply because what, as a Priest he has grace to promise, as a King he has power to bestow? And his every regal act is performed for the the purpose of giving power and efficacy to his prophetic revelations, and to his sacerdotal grace. And the offices, thus united in him through his whole life, were not separated at its close. His sufferings in the garden and on the cross, not only constituted a perfect satisfaction to divine justice for our sins, but formed at the same time, by far the most impres-

sive and instructive portion of his prophetic manifestation of the divine character, and also the most victorious and triumphant exhibition of his regal power, when the serpent's head was bruised, and principalities and powers defeated and triumphed over.

There remains but one view of the subject to be presented, and that I cannot better give, than in a comment on the following passage of Scripture.

"Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them, who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he taketh not hold of angels; but of the seed of Abraham he taketh hold. Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren; that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." Heb. ii. 14–17.

In the sixteenth verse I have followed the marginal reading. I have done so, because it is the literal translation of the Apostle's words; because it appears to be necessary to his chain of reasoning; and because the received reading

seems to involve an unmeaning tautology. The fact, I conceive, which the Apostle meant to state is, that he undertook to help not angels, but men, "wherefore," he adds, "in all things it behooved him to be made like to his brethren"—like, not to angels, but to men.

In order to render my view of this passage as clear as possible, I would direct the attention of the reader to a principle that is often exemplified in Scripture. I refer to the frequent preference of the younger to the elder. Of the two first-born of men, Cain and Abel, the younger was chosen and the elder rejected. Of the three sons of Noah, the second progenitor of mankind, Shem, the youngest, was chosen as the heir of promise. Of the two sons of Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac, though Abraham had repeatedly prayed, "Oh that Ishmael might live before thee," it was said, "in Isaac shall thy seed be called." Of the two sons of Isaac, Esau and Jacob, before they were born, it was said, "the elder shall serve the younger." Of the two sons of Joseph, Ephraim the younger was preferred to Manasseh the elder. Of the sons of Jesse, David the youngest, and whom his father did not even think it worth while to present to the prophet, was chosen to be king of Israel. And to name no more, of all the sons of David, So-

lomon was chosen to build a temple to the Lord.

Now, a fact of this nature so frequently occurring, and so sedulously recorded, must be considered as pointedly intended to direct our attention to the principle involved in it; and the Apostle Paul, in expounding one of these instances, has taught us how to understand all the rest. They are intended to manifest the sovereignty of the Lord,—to show that he seeth not as man seeth, nor chooseth as man would choose,—to show that all power and all excellence are from God alone. And, therefore, "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things that are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught the things that are." And why? "That no flesh should glory in his presence,"—that all should own that whatever grace, or goodness, or excellency is in them, it is not from themselves, but from God. and that, if they differ from others, it is God who maketh them to differ. This principle, therefore, which is involved in the preference of the younger to the elder, and to which our attention is directed not once nor twice, but many

times, is seen in all the dispensations of God, that his own sovereignty may be manifested in them all.

While every thing in the works of men has a tendency to degenerate, God has from the beginning manifested that his works have a very different character, and are continually going on from good to better in endless progression, and that one dispensation only prepares the way for, and gives place to another that is more perfect. Thus the patriarchal dispensation prepared the way for the Jewish, the Jewish for the Christian, the present state of the Christian for its millennial state, and that for something still more glorious. And thus when the Gospel was first established, it was not by the wisdom, or the wealth, or the power of man, but by feeble means in opposition to all these. The treasure was committed to earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might be seen to be of God.

But these instances, and many others that might be added to them,—the preference of the younger to the elder in so many cases,—the choice of the Jews to be God's peculiar people, when they were the fewest of all people,—the choice of the fishermen of Galilee to build the church,—while they all exhibit the sovereignty of God, are but very obscure, and partial, and

limited exhibitions of it, compared with that universal and glorious manifestation of it referred to in the text under discussion, where the choice lay not between one individual and another, nor between one nation and another, but between two lost WORLDS. There stood before God two fallen families,—fallen angels and fallen men. Alike they were doomed to wo for their sins, and unless an almighty arm should lay hold on them, alike would they both have sunk in remediless misery. It belonged to God alone to determine whether he would save one or both of these families, or leave them both to perish. And when he had announced his determination to save one of them, that the work of redemption might afford a new manifestation of the divine perfections, and give a more clear and a more glorious revelation of these perfections than his creatures could ever otherwise have seen, it still remained with him to determine which of the two fallen families should be chosen as the objects in whose salvation this manifestation should be made. And O let our souls rejoice that here also the principle, to which our attention is so carefully directed in Scripture,—and so carefully directed just for the purpose that we might not overlook it, or fail to see it here,—was acted upon. The younger was preferred to the

elder,—though carnal judgment would probably have made choice of angels, the originally nobler family, and have left the meaner creature of clay to perish.

This is the glorious and happy truth so clearly expressed here by the apostle, "He taketh not hold of Angels, but of the seed of Abraham he taketh hold." He plainly declares the unspeakable majesty of the Divine Sovereignty in choosing fallen men as the objects of that work of redemption, which, beyond all things, reveals his own glorious character, rather than fallen angels, who, to the eye of sense, might perhaps seem to have a better claim. And with this view of the Divine Sovereignty, he combines the equally astonishing view of the unspeakable condescension of the Divine love. Of one of two fallen families, who are alike in his hands, and not one word in favour of either of which might any created being venture to speak, he saith, "Let them be reserved in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day;" while of the other he saith, "Deliver from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom." Here is his sovereignty. And what is the ransom for the race to be redeemed? The eternal Son becomes man, takes upon him flesh and blood similar in all respects, sinfulness excepted, to the creatures of clay whom he came to redeem,

and dies in their stead that they might live. Here is the depth of his love. And if it was a great proof of the free and sovereign goodness of God, that he chose Israel when they were but "few men in number," "the fewest of all people," how much more illustrious a display of the same grace did he give, when he chose men in preference to angels, as the objects of redemption, when these creatures of clay were few indeed, when the whole race consisted of only two individuals. Any created judgment would have said, What are these two feeble individuals that they should, for a moment, be put into the scale with a multitude of angels? Of what consequence can be the loss of two earthly creatures, who may be so destroyed that none shall ever spring from them, compared with the loss of so many superior creatures? But God determined in a different manner 'He took not hold of fallen angels, but of fallen men he took hold.' And why? "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

From this we see what it is that constitutes at once the danger and the dignity of man. God has permitted rebellion to be raised against his authority, that in the progress of putting it down he might give a manifestation of his perfections which otherwise could not have been

given, and our world is the field on which the powers of light and of darkness draw out their forces in hostile array, and in that awful conflict which so deeply engages and interests the attention of the whole universe, the post of danger and of glory, the van of the battle is assigned to man. Everywhere is the contest carried on. The human heart is itself the principal scene of strife, and the soul of man is the victor's prize, and man himself the chief gainer or sufferer by the result. Angels go forth as ministering spirits to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation, and doubtless delight to promote, as far as may be in their power, the work of our salvation. And cheering and animating as it is to know that holy angels do go forth to our aid, and doubtless do render us essential support, though at present we can neither know the services that they do us, nor the means by which they do them, yet can we not forget that they mingle, not as principals but as auxiliaries in the strife; that ours is the danger in the war, and ours is the gain of victory.

And who is he who mustereth the armies of the Lord of Hosts? Who is the Captain of salvation by whose strength they are made strong, in whose might they are enabled to conquer? Who makes them to triumph over principalities and powers, over the rulers of the darkness of

this world, over spiritual wickedness in high places? Who is he who so fully accomplished, under circumstances of incalculably greater difficulty, that which the first man had failed to accomplish? Was he one to whom the terms *fallen*, *sinful* could with any propriety be applied? No. God calleth him "Mine elect in whom my soul delighteth," "My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Could language like this be applied to one who himself needed to be reconciled to God before he could reconcile others? No. When man was made, Satan had come into the world, boasting that he had led principalities and powers into sin; and shall this creature of clay stand? And the easiness of his conquest, and the completeness of his dominion, seemed to leave for a time the wisdom and power of God in doubt. He had found one man in whom he had nothing, but soon implanted sinfulness in him and made him an easy prey. He is compelled now to meet, on the field of his own conquered and polluted world, the Second Man, coming in all the untainted sinlessness of the First Man, but surrounded with difficulties and exposed to trials of which the First Man, had he retained his innocence, could have had no experience, and yet so mightily upheld by the Godhead dwelling in him, that Satan and all his powers could find

nothing in him, and could implant nothing in him, with which they might claim alliance, else assuredly had he also become their prey. And when Satan had tried him and found nothing in him, then did he stir up his agents to plot his destruction, not knowing that the destruction of Christ was the appointed means of his own; that when Christ gave a life which he did not owe, and which could not be taken from him by force, the life of a world dead in sin was restored,--that when he entered voluntarily into the dominion of death, that dominion was for ever broken.

And if the events of any war are calculated to arouse our attention, and interest our feelings, surely much more is that war calculated to do so, where more than blood may be spilt, and more than empire may be lost or won. When our own countrymen are abroad in the field,--when the interests of our country are at stake, with what anxious expectation are the news of every day waited for; and when they inform us that the hostile armies are approaching each other, with what palpitating eagerness are they read! And when the day does come that brings their power to actual trial and decision, with what feelings do we read and reread the minutest details, and dwell upon every incident, and find every thing, however trifling,

possess a deep importance from its connexion with such a scene! They are our countrymen, our friends, our brothers, whom we view arranged upon the "cloudy edge of battle ere it join," and who under our eye, are passing into the fatal contest. We hear from afar the "thunder of the captains and the shoutings." We place ourselves side by side with the warrior, as he advances to the shock, where point to point, and man to man, the embattled squadrons close in deadly strife; and while life and death hang in dreadful suspense, our feelings are just the warrior's own, and our very nostrils become expanded with the intensity of a sensation that hardly permits us to breathe, and every pulsation of our hearts bounds in perfect unison with his. We can scarcely at such a moment enter upon a discussion of the goodness or badness of the cause, or to philosophize on the manifold crimes and atrocities of war. When we have imbibed the very spirit of the warrior, when we are glorying, exulting in the view, in the very feeling of an energy which no toils can weary, of an ardour which no difficulties can abate, of a courage which the multiplication of dangers only arouses to a greater intensity of daring; at such a moment the coldness of our moral calculations is melted away; the voice of reason and of philosophy is

drowned; and "the raptures of the strife" are all our own; and to no voice can we listen, till the "earthquake voice of victory" bursts upon our ear. I ask not if this be a Christian or a righteous feeling. I am merely stating a fact of which every man must be conscious, that on such an occasion, such are our feelings. Nor is the art of the poet or the orator requisite to awaken them. The interest lies in the facts themselves, and the dry details of a despatch, or the prosaic insipidity of a gazette, has doubtless often been read with an intensity of interest which the most animated poetry never excited.

But while there are few who do not in some degree experience these feelings, there are many who are totally dead to the feelings that should naturally be awakened by a much more important and eventful war,—that moral and spiritual war which is carried on around us and within us, where more than mortal powers are opposed, and more than mortal interests are at stake. But whatever we may be, the angels who have become acquainted with the character of God, through the work of man's redemption, are not insensible to the progress of that work. They surround the throne of the Most High, with golden harps; and the events which awaken these harps to heavenly harmony, and pour

from their strings that melody to which God condescends to listen, and which mortal ear may never hear, are just the triumphs of "the redeemed of the Lord" over the influence of that "other lord" who has had dominion over them; and whose chains they have been enabled to burst, through the power of him, who amidst all the weakness of human flesh, and under all the weight of the guilt of a lost world, and all the deadliest efforts of Satan's power, never fell, and never felt one unholy desire or emotion. And "the spirits of the just made perfect," clothed in the spotless robe of a Redeemer's righteousness, feel it their glorious privilege to tell of the toils which they have been enabled to sustain in fighting the good fight,—of the hardness which, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, they have been strengthened to endure,—and of the energy which they derived from the consciousness that when "Christ was formed in them the hope of glory;" their hearts were enriched not only with an uncorrupted, but with an incorruptible seed,—a principle which Satan could not subvert, nor death itself destroy. And can we hope to partake with them in their raptures, to unite with them in singing the song of triumph and of praise, if we can contemplate the mighty warfare that is going

on between the powers of light and darkness, with the most perfect apathy, as if we had no personal interest in the matter; and while we have an ear open to the most trivial news of the day, have neither an ear to hear, nor a heart to be interested in the events of this mighty war, but listen to any mention of it, as if it were a matter of less importance than the savage encounters of ferocious hordes of barbarians, on the banks of the Danube or the shores of the Euxine.

I have but one additional remark to make. It is this; that for man no middle fate is prepared, but happiness or misery in the extreme must be his. The selected instruments of carrying on that war which God wages with sin; the weak vessels of clay chosen to confound the mighty, through the power of him who was incarnate for the purpose of securing even to us worms of the dust the victory over death and him that had the power of death,—if wearied with the toils of the warfare, or insensible to the glory of the victory, we desert to the enemy, and continue his willing and unresisting slaves, then do we sink into condemnation under the weight of a criminality which even fallen angels could not contract, for they at least have never treated the offered mercy of God with contempt. And well may

they wonder to see in the human heart, a blindness, a perversity, a madness which despises even the offered friendship of God, and the glories of heaven. And, on the other hand, they who through faith in Christ enter into the kingdom of heaven, enter there, the admiration of angels, purchased with a price which for the fallen portion of their own order was never paid, and rescued out of dangers to which they themselves were never exposed; and therefore do they glorify God in his saints, and admire him in all them that believe.

Human nature is at this moment the highest of created natures, and more intimately united to the Godhead than any other; and where our Head is, there, in due time, shall all his members be. Whoever then thou art who readest this my page, my message to thee is, remember that in a few short years, thou must occupy that place to which angels may look up with admiration, or that on which devils may look down with the conviction that they have been less guilty. Higher than heaven is the fate of him whom the Sovereign of the universe became man to redeem; and lower than hell must be the fate of him who, even at such a price, refused to be redeemed. This awful yet animating consideration, may well arouse us to hasten our escape from "the wrath that is to

come," and to "resist even unto blood, striving against sin." How powerfully does it enforce the admonition of the Apostle, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord!"

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